

TRIPOLITANIA



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WITH THE AUTHORIZED
ECONOMY STANDARDS

BY LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY

TRAVEL, ETC.—

ALGERIA TO-DAY

LIFE IN AN INDIAN OUTPOST

**THE LAND OF THE BOXERS, or CHINA
UNDER THE ALLIES**

JUNGLE AND RIVER WARFARE

ROMANCE—

THE ELEPHANT GOD

THE RED MARSHAL

THE JUNGLE GIRL

THE DESERT LOVERS

THE SANDS OF DEATH

TIGER GIRL

LOVE'S LOTTERY

THE MONKEY GOD

DAUGHTERS OF EVE

JUNGLE—

DWELLERS IN THE JUNGLE

IN THE GREEN JUNGLE

MILITARY—

A MANUAL OF WAR TRAINING

A MANUAL OF COMPANY TRAINING

TRAINING FOR TRENCH WARFARE

TACTICS FOR BEGINNERS

**THE TRAINING OF THE VOLUNTEERS
FOR WAR**



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TRIPOLI

Photo by the Author

TRIPOLITANIA

by

LIEUT.-COLONEL GORDON CASSERLY

SOCIÉTÉ DE GÉOGRAPHIE D'ALGER ET DE L'AFRIQUE DU NORD
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

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the Author*

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TO
THE RIGHT HON. THE VISCOUNT
AND VISCOUNTESS TORRINGTON
IN SINCERE FRIENDSHIP



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HISTORY moves swiftly to-day. When this book was begun no enemy stood on Tripolitanian soil. Before "Finis" was written to it British war-chariots rumbled through the streets of Tripoli; and at the sound of their wheels the Eagles of Italy spread their wings and flew away as the giant battle-birds of England and America darkened the skies above the land that the Rome of the Cæsars had ruled for centuries. The pinchbeck Second Empire lasted barely thirty inglorious years. And Tripoli, which had seen the coming and the going of Carthaginian, Roman, Vandal, Byzantine, Spaniard, Arab and Turk, watched imperturbably the passing of the Fascists.



**FRENCH
WEST and
EQUATORIAL AFRICA**

MAP OF TRIPOLITANIA

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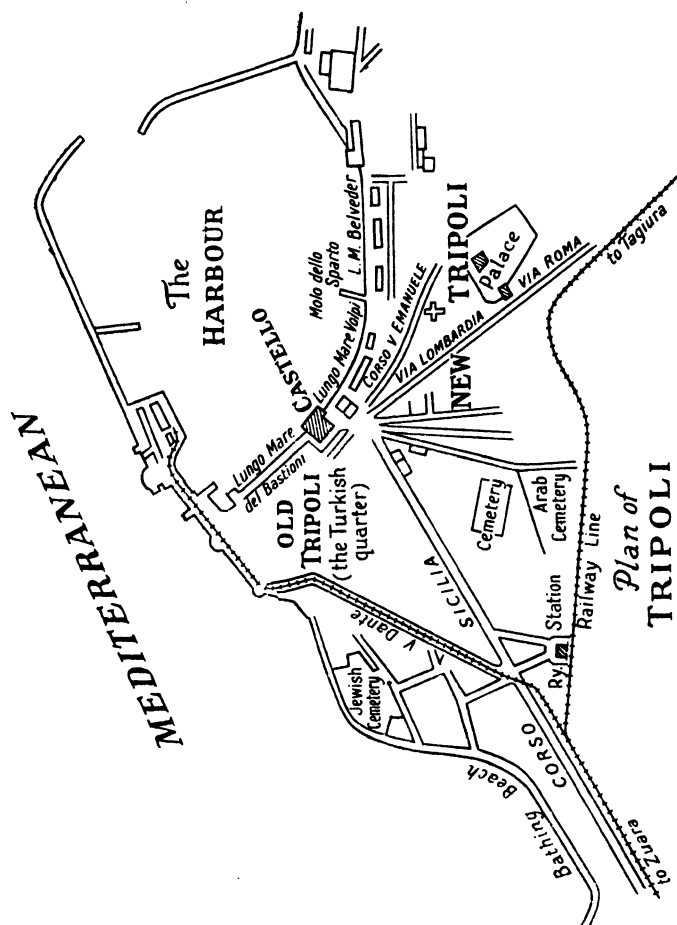
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TRIPOLI

AS the steamer from Sicily nears the African coast the low shore of Tripolitania rises slowly out of the blue Mediterranean. East and west it stretches in white beaches against a background of green oases, in which slender date-palms rise above masses of fruit-trees—pomegranates, almonds, apricots. And through the vegetation peep out the whitewashed cottages of Italian colonists and Berber cultivators.

Then ahead, as the ship approaches, a low promontory thrusts out into the sea to meet it. To the west it shelters a large harbour, protected on the other side and on the north by the long arm of a curving stone pier, which runs inland to a fantastic jumble of crowding houses, dazzlingly white in the brilliant sunshine. An expanse of flat roofs topped by the graceful minarets of many mosques, and the feathery crowns of countless palm-trees rising out of luxuriant gardens, hidden among the buildings. It is Tripoli, capital of Tripolitania. A dream city, lovely to look at from the sea, sleeping under the blue African sky, silent and seeming at peace with all the world. Yet few other towns have seen as much war, have bathed deeper in blood, in the long, tragic centuries of its history. Victim of the greed and angry passions of its many masters and their foes, it has suffered siege and sack from heathen, Moslem and Christian since its founders, traders and seamen of Sidon, first landed on its white beaches. Out on its sparkling bay have floated the frail barks of Phœnician merchant-adventurers, the war galleys of Carthage and of Rome, the sea-stained Viking ships of Northmen, rovers from Sicily, the proud vessels of a King of Spain, armadas of Turkish sultans. Avenging frigates of the young American Republic come to punish insults to the newly-born Stars and Stripes from reckless pirates protected by the bloodstained rulers of Tripoli. And the grim shapes of Italian warships belching shot and shell at a helpless city.

As the steamer enters the modern harbour and draws alongside the long pier, a nearer view of the town shows an epitome of its story—high ramparts of the old citadel, the Castello, or the Spanish Fortress as they call it; the blind walls of old Turkish houses; the minarets and domes of mosques, mingled with the massive bulk of a Christian cathedral and the pseudo-Oriental architecture of European banks and offices, with such modern excrescences as cinemas and theatres. For the Italians have



welded on to an old Arab town the typical buildings of modern European civilisation.

On the pier runs a railway that takes from the ships alongside the quay their imports of luxuries and necessities from Europe, or brings to them their cargoes of exports from the Sahara and Equatorial Africa to pay for them.

In taxis or ramshackle victorias drawn by skinny horses, the passengers from the newly arrived steamer go down the pier, which ends where the white houses of the native quarter begin. To the right the railway continues on the Lungomare della Vittoria, past the Mausoleum dedicated to the soldiers who died in the Tripoli war, over the open sea dotted with islets close inshore; then it turns inland to reach the Central Station, the terminus of Tripolitania's scanty railway system.

But most of the new arrivals, in taxis, carriages or afoot, follow another road, along by the harbour, Lungomare dei Bastioni, which swings inland to avoid the massive bulk of the old Castello which juts out over the water. Curving round it, the road becomes a splendid promenade, the Lungomare Conte Volpi, a monument to the Governor of that name, who assumed office in 1922 and to whom is due the credit of reconquering Tripolitania from the Senussi rebels who, before his coming, had kept Tripoli in a state of siege in which no white man dared go outside the city walls. The Promenade, raised above the harbour by a high revetment surmounted by a granite wall with ornamental triple-lamped iron standards, is flanked on the landward side by palms and flower-beds. In pleasant gardens stands Tripoli's first bid to attract globe-trotters and tourists and enrich herself with their spoils, as the mother-country has done for so long. It is the Grand Hotel, semi-Oriental in architectural design. It is more than a hostelry, it is a pioneer. For before it was opened in the spring of 1925 there was no hotel worthy of the name in the city, or, indeed, in the whole province. Now there are several, some catering for the rich foreign traveller, others for the smaller purses of Italians.

It would be hard to better the position of the Grand Hotel. From its arcaded balconies there is a fine view over the harbour, the long sweep of the Promenade from the Castello on the left to the low green promontory on the right, with its gay villas bowered in bright gardens. Beyond the pier the sunlit sea stretches to the horizon, its deep blue waste flecked with the triangular white sails of fishing-boats that evoke memories of the feluccas of former-day pirates.

Near the Grand Hotel are other fine buildings, among them the Military Club and the Army Headquarters. The Lungomare Conte Volpi continues on to the Promenade del Belvedere and,

passing through the suburb of Dhara, reaches the new Government buildings and the Race Course.

When the Italians came to Tripoli they found it a rabbit-warren of narrow, garbage-strewn lanes, twisting between leprous walls hiding insanitary Turkish houses. The mosques with their up-pointing minarets were the only diversity of architecture, and none of them were beautiful. The Turks, who had held the city for so long, knew nothing of hygiene and sanitation and cared less, as anyone who saw Stamboul before the first Great War can testify. So the Tripoli of the beginning of the twentieth century was little different from what it had been for hundreds of years.

But its new masters altered that. Although in their own country there was nearly as much dirt and disease in villages, and even in some towns, they were anxious to prove to the civilised world that they could make their new colony a model to surpass their rival France's possessions next door in North Africa. But at first their Government in Italy had no money to waste on town-planning or embellishment of far-away Tripoli; for hardly had it become theirs after a brief campaign against the Turks than rebellion, religious strife and then the First World War threatened to rob them of their new acquisition. So not until Governor Volpi came to Tripolitania, and persuaded the Fascist rulers in Rome to be more generous to their new possession, was any money forthcoming. When he had ended his term of office in Africa and returned to Italy to be created Conte Volpi di Misurata and appointed Finance Minister in Mussolini's Cabinet, he was able to loose strings of the nation's purse, and Tripoli was no longer stinted of funds. In his time it had only one modern street, in which were a few offices, banks and shops, as well as a modest two-storied Governor's Palace for him. Some pleasant European villas in pretty gardens were built—residences in striking contrast to the Turkish dwellings in narrow alleys in the town.

But now the modernisation of Tripoli went ahead. The open space by the old Castello had become the Piazza d'Italia, and from it straight, wide roads, radiating like the sticks of a fan, were driven. There is the Corso Vittorio Emanuele III, with some of the principal new buildings—the Town Hall, the Post Office, the Bank of Naples, the Law Courts and the Galleria de Bono, edifices which look like palaces compared with the gloomy native houses huddling close by. Further on there is a wide piazza, on one side of which is the splendid new Roman Catholic Cathedral. The Corso ends before the imposing but unbeautiful pile of the new Government House, which replaces the smaller dwelling of Conte Volpi. It is an unhappy attempt at imitating Oriental architecture, with its large and ungraceful central dome and two

smaller ones surmounting the wings, and long arcaded verandas. But its fine setting almost atones for its ungainly bulk, for it stands in a spacious green park with a background of groves of palm-trees.

Four other wide, straight streets also radiate from the Piazza d'Italia, piercing the crowded mass of houses of the native quarter and acting as lungs to the stifled town. The most westerly and longest of these is the Corso Sicilia, which runs out away from the city and draws near to the sea at the fine bathing-beach. Before that, it passes close to the ambitious project, begun in 1926, of the annual Sample Fair, the object of which was to develop the industrial and commercial connection of the colony with Italy. Its handsome entrance and ornamental pavilions attracted visitors who are not interested in trade.

The Corso Sicilia also goes near the Central Railway Station.

The contrast between the wide streets with their very modern European buildings and the narrow lanes between the secluded Turkish houses is very great. But anyone walking along them in the heat of the summer may be tempted to question whether the airy thoroughfares, with no protection from the scorching sun, are really preferable to the shade of the native alleys, some of which are actually roofed over.

Few Europeans, except tourists, are to be seen in the latter, but the users of the former were interestingly varied. In a morning stroll along the Corso Vittorio Emmanuele III one might see a squad of young Fascisti militiamen in black shirts, breeches and gaiters, with tassels dangling from their little caps marching with quick stride past an old Arab clad in an enveloping woollen cloak, the universal *barricano*, which covered him from his shaved head to his bare, flat feet at the end of spindly shanks thrust into loose, heelless slippers, the *babouche* worn by most Moslems of North Africa. Then came a group of cheery, grinning negroes, similarly dressed, followed by their wives shrouded in cloaks that hid them from head to heel. Nothing of their faces could be seen, except one eye in each, which opened in horrified disapproval as its gaze fell on a smartly-dressed young Italian lady with short skirts revealing silk stockings and high-heeled shoes. Her pretty face was bared to the sight of all men. To these women, just come from the interior of Africa, this was bad enough ; but they were still more shocked when they saw her stop, smilingly, to allow her hand to be kissed by a pair of handsome Italian officers in well-cut, silver-buttoned tunics, tight breeches and gaiters, wide-peaked caps, with steel-hilted swords at their sides. And, ignorant of the fact that she was outraging the ideas of convention of the scandalised negresses, she chatted familiarly with these men in public !

But a lithe, slender, brown-skinned girl with good features and dark eyes, whose face would be pretty if her forehead and chin were not tattooed with strange designs, passed by and looked admiringly and enviously at the white lady. She wore a loose red blouse and skirt and a red and parti-coloured shawl thrown over her black hair, large silver rings in her ears, a silver necklace, and a long silver chain hanging low down on her bosom with many charms and amulets dangling from it. At her throat were many strangely designed silver ornaments, while broad silver bracelets encircled her wrists. She was unveiled, for she was a Berber girl from the hills and walked with the firm tread and easy grace of the mountaineer.

She turned her eyes from the Europeans to stare boldly at a tall, handsome Arab soldier coming towards her down the street. A gallant figure, indeed, in a sky-blue stable-jacket, loose white trousers tucked into long red boots, a thin white cotton garment draped over his uniform and his tasselled red cap, while a red cloak hung down his back and was flung gracefully across his chest and left shoulder. A heavy, steel-scabbarded sabre clanked on the pavement as he strode along. He was unconscious of the Berber maiden's gaze, for he was a trooper of the Governor's Bodyguard and too used to female admiration to waste a glance on a wild girl from the mountains.

An Italian *carabiniere* in the short-waisted, long-tailed tight black jacket with its double row of silver buttons and silver lace on the collar, a white sword-belt, and wearing the cocked hat with its ends pointing to each side—the whole costume borrowed from Napoleon Bonaparte—came by and raised a white-gloved hand in salute to a Fiat car driven by a military chauffeur and containing two high staff officers. It went down the street at a fast pace, but suddenly pulled up with screeching brakes as a shambling herd of heavily-laden camels turned out of a side street and spread across the Corso, to the loudly-expressed anger of the soldier chauffeur and his officers. The Arab and negro drivers of the caravan, which was ending its three hundred miles journey from the Fezzan, rushed frantically at their animals, tugged at their nose strings, beat them and tried to push the ungainly beasts to the side, cursing them and abusing their female relations for generations back in the choicest terms of Oriental vituperation. But, indifferent to the men's insults and their blows, the weary camels plodded on in their own way and continued to block the road. The *carabiniere* had turned at the noise of the tumult and, grasping the situation, ran to the officers' aid. But his interference and loudly-shouted orders only added to the confusion of the camel-drivers and had no effect on their beasts. Other motorists, following behind the staff officers' car, increased the din by frenzied blasts on their sirens.



Photo by the Author

ITALIAN OFFICERS AND NATIVE SOLDIERS GIVE A PARTY TO THE SOLDIERS' CHILDREN

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Photo by the Author

TRIPOLI HARBOUR
THE CASTELLO IN THE MIDDLE

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A crowd of Arabs gathered on the sidewalk ; and a handful of brown-skinned urchins in scanty garments rushed in to enjoy the fun, added their puny efforts to move the now irritated and snarling camels and joined their shrill voices to the deeper tones of the shouting men.

The varied costumes of the mixed crowd in the street made the scene resemble one in musical comedy. And its setting of European office buildings, banks and shops with Italian clerks and business men popping in and out of doorways or looking from the windows to see what was the cause of the disturbance, added to the incongruity of such a happening in a civilised town.

But in time the camels were moved on and traffic resumed its accustomed flow. When the road was clear, an old Arab sitting on the haunches of a miserable little donkey, went by ; and a cavalry officer and his mounted orderly trotted past him ; two or three chattering Sicilian work-girls walked slowly along the pavement and exchanged smiles with a couple of Italian soldiers.

Few Arab women are ever seen in the streets of Tripoli. Those of the better class rarely leave their houses, except to visit the cemeteries on Friday, or the Turkish Baths on the days when these are reserved for their sex. Such opportunities for meeting their friends and exchanging gossip are a welcome break in their dull lives. In the streets they do not wear intriguing veils like their Moslem sisters in Algeria and Tunisia, but hide their faces from the profane gaze of strange men in gathered-up folds of their all-shrouding cloaks. So they add no colour or glamour to the outside world as they pass quickly through it.

But luckily the pavements of the thoroughfares of the New Tripoli do not depend on them for brightness and animation. Pretty Italian girls in the latest fashions walk along them in chattering groups, pause before dressmakers' windows or crowd into confectioners' shops to eat ices. And in well-appointed restaurants smartly-dressed ladies are lunching with their husbands, while others drink coffee in the cafés and bow to their friends at the tables around. All as it might be on the Corso in Rome or the Via Roma in Naples. Then in the summer the white beach of the Lido is thronged with pretty women in daring swim-suits, sun-bathing or splashing in the sparkling sea ; just as thousands of their sisters are doing at that moment in Via Reggio or San Remo back in Italy.

And these exiles are not so far away from their native land, for the link with the home-country was strengthened in recent years by more frequent and faster communications. Instead of the former one small weekly steamer from Siracusa on the east coast of Sicily, two companies, the Compagnia Italiana Transatlantica and the Florio, maintained a more frequent service with

luxurious steamers and even motor-ships of 5800 and 7000 tons, at seventeen knots, some from Naples or Genoa.

Even quicker communication was provided by air. The Rome-Tripoli service brought Tripolitania within a day's flight of the capital. So Italian residents in the colony could always spend their holidays in their native land when they wanted to escape the summer heat of Africa.

Those who had no desire or opportunity to cross the sea could find a refuge in the hot weather in the hill-station of Gharian in the Jebel, 65 miles from Tripoli, and at an elevation of 2350 feet, where the climate was cool in the summer months. In winter snow sometimes falls there.

At all seasons the residents of Tripoli were well provided with amusements. Dances, theatres and cinemas were not lacking. There was lawn tennis in the grounds of the Grand Hotel, a race course in the suburbs, a Boat Club, a Tennis Club, a Stadium on the Corso Sicilia. The Lido was a great attraction, with its excellent bathing-beach in summer. There were the Military Club, the Italian Club and an Automobile Club. Tourist agencies arranged excursions to long-buried Roman cities at Leptis Magna and Sabratha along the coast, and even to far-distant Saharan oases in the Fezzan. So even those forced by duty or slender purses to remain in Tripoli could find entertainment there.

For there were many poor Italians, Sicilians and Maltese who could never afford even the third-class fares to their homelands. It was not easy to make money in Tripolitania. It is not a rich country, for up to the present its products are mostly agricultural—barley, fruit, esparto grass. So far no rich deposits of metallic ore have been found; there are no industries except some carpet-making at Misurata, and one tobacco factory. Tripoli has always been the port through which flowed the trade of ostrich feathers, ivory, dates, salt, wool and leather brought by camel caravans from Timbuctoo and the Sudan for export to Europe. But there were few fortunes to be made by this in Tripoli.

The capital of the colony has naturally always been a garrison town since its capture by the Italians. As soon as possible, the European troops were mostly replaced by natives recruited in Tripolitania or brought from Eritrea. The officers were Italian; and, when visiting their barracks and camps I was always struck by their affectionate regard for their Arab or negro soldiers, a feeling which was plainly reciprocated by the men. There seemed to be the same friendly comradeship as between British officers and their sepoy in the Indian Army. And the Italian commissioned ranks extended it to the children of their men. I have been present at treats given by them to the brown-faced urchins of the regiment, who showed not the least awe of the kind *signori*, whose least word was law to the youngsters' fathers.



Photo by the Author

OLD TRIPOLI
A STREET BREAD-SELLER

See page 16



Photo by the Author

THE CAMEL MARKET
IN THE OASIS OF TRIPOLI

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Life in Tripoli was pleasant enough for these Italian officers, but it was not so attractive for those stationed at Gharian or in lonely outposts in the Sahara. Certainly none really enjoyed foreign service and all disliked being so far from their native land. Few of them could have dreamed to what a distance from Italy an unhappy fate would one day transport so many of them !

OLD TRIPOLI

THE distance between the New Tripoli and the Old is not merely the breadth of a street, but a space of three hundred years and more. Turn into one of the narrow lanes of the native town—and you step right into the Arabian Nights. These dingy alleys might be in the Bagdad of Haroun Al Raschid. Through such as these the Caliph wandered at night when he stole away from his palace to see how his subjects lived. Just such blank walls confronted him, just such small doors, opening by chance, gave him stolen glimpses of courtyards within, with windows of lamp-lit rooms showing tantalising visions of jewel-decked lovely women, swathed in brocaded silk, lying on piles of soft cushions. In just such tiny shops, did he see late-working goldsmiths beat out ornaments for some rich merchant to bestow on his new favourite on the morrow. Yes; the old Turkish quarters of Tripoli have changed little in centuries, their inhabitants lead the same lives as their ancestors of past generations.

The hub of the city, new and old, is the high-walled Castello, jutting out over the shallow water at the head of the harbour. They call it the Spanish Fortress; but its origin goes back much farther than the brief intrusion of the Spaniards in the early part of the sixteenth century. Some date it back to the seventh century, but others hold that it was first built by the Romans. Probably in one shape or another it served for two thousand years to protect or dominate Tripoli. Certainly, when Ferdinand of Spain captured the town in A.D. 1510 he built or rebuilt the Castello more or less in its present form. It was handed over to the Knights of St John less than twenty years later. They lost it and Tripoli very shortly to a pair of pirates and then it fell into the hands of the Turks. Pasha succeeded pasha in the governing of the city under the more or less nominal suzerainty of the Sultans of Constantinople, whom they served just as faithfully as it suited them. One of them, Ahmed Pasha Caramanli, set himself up as an independent sovereign and founded a dynasty. The Castello was his stronghold and palace; as it was of each ruler who succeeded him in the turbulent years. And behind its high walls they defied foreign foes and rebellious subjects. They took their share of the plunder of the many pirates who established themselves in Tripoli as others of their trade did in Tunis, Algiers and Salé, content to pay a percentage of their unlawful gains to the Pasha then in power for his protection

against their enemies. For their piracies on the sea and murderous raids on shore had provoked the enmity of many foreign powers, who sent warships to bombard Tripoli in the hope of crushing the freebooters and to deter their patrons from sheltering them. But in vain. The industry was too profitable to prince and plunderers. Many Christian nations sought the easy way of securing the safety of their nationals' ships by paying blackmail for protection. Even the far-away United States of America were disbursing eighty-three thousand dollars a year to these ruffians at the close of the eighteenth century, and went to war with the Pasha, when he demanded more, rather than pay him. When in 1835 the Sultan of Constantinople contrived to get possession of Tripoli again, his local representatives let the old Castello fall in ruin ; so that when the Italians attacked in the following century it was useless for defence. The new conquerors repaired it, but utilised it merely as a residence for the Governor and as offices for the Military Headquarters and for the Police. But all these have quitted it, and after so many stormy years the old citadel has sunk to housing the Archæological Museum. So now, instead of a gorgeously-robed pasha sitting in it in royal state, feasting with his nobles or dallying with the beauties of his seraglio, there is only a curator surrounded by headless statues and coloured mosaics.

When the Army Headquarters were transferred from the Castello to the new building the residents of Tripoli were deprived of a popular daily spectacle in the appropriate setting of the old fortress. On the landward side the citadel was entered by a high-arched gateway with a palm-tree on one side and a sentry-box on the other. And here every afternoon the military ceremony of the " Changing of the Guard " was carried out. From far off were heard the harsh notes of brass trumpets, the roll of drums and a weird wailing as of bagpipes. Then down the street came a small column of troops. They were men of a *battaglione libico*—that is, a battalion of Arabs of this Tripolitan province of Libya.

They were dressed in a dark brown shade of khaki with black-tasselled red fezzes ; and their leather belts were buckled over woollen cummerbunds (or waist-sashes) of a regimental tartan of green, red, blue, yellow or some extraordinary blending of colours that would dazzle a Highlander.

The instruments that mimicked the bagpipes without the drone are short reed flageolets ; and to the untrained ear the Arab music played on them sounds not so very different from that of Scots musicians. They are the same instruments used by the bands of the *Tirailleurs Algériens* of the Algerian army.

Behind the pipers came trumpeters with long brass trumpets on which they blew a bugle march. A company colour standard

was carried aloft at the head of the little column, which was the Main Guard on its way to relieve the guard mounted the previous day at the Castello.

The sentry at the castle gate that day was, perhaps, a trooper of an Arab cavalry regiment. He wore a white cotton uniform with a pale yellow Zouave jacket and a red fez. As the detachment approached he turned out the guard, which fell in on one side of the gate.

The band wheeled into position behind it, and the new guard halted and faced the old guard. Both presented arms, the trumpeters blew the "Salute," and the band played the Italian national anthem, at which all soldiers and civilians passing by on the road halted, stood to attention and saluted. Even carriages stopped and ladies in them stood up in respect.

When the hymn ended, all went on their way, the guards changed over and the one relieved marched off behind the band, which played a lively quickstep.

This day, it may be, both detachments belonged to Arab corps. To-morrow the relief might chance to be men of an Italian regiment, or, perhaps, of an Eritrean battalion, tall, lean black soldiers with high red fezzes and gay-coloured tufts on top, khaki uniforms and bare feet. Before the shadow of war darkened Tripolitania, Italy had about 17,000 soldiers in it, of whom 4000 were white. After the rebels had been crushed that force was considered sufficient to hold the province with its population of twenty thousand Europeans and half a million natives. But as the hour of conflict approached, the number of troops was very considerably increased.

As the town grew in the past, the houses clustered under the shelter of the citadel. Crowded together inside the walls, it became a place of narrow alleys and winding lanes that remain to this day and preserve the ancient character of Tripoli. Stroll down the first *suk*, or business street—the word also means a "market"—that you come to. On either side are native shops, each merely a square hole three or four feet above the ground, eight feet broad and the same in height. It has no counter, for the floor goes back to the wall behind, and on it sits the tradesman, his wares spread or hung up beside him, or stacked on shelves, every article within easy reach of his hand as he sits cross-legged. There he squats like a spider, patiently awaiting custom, never soliciting it. Indeed, if an intending buyer does approach him he seems absolutely uninterested, almost annoyed, at the prospect of being disturbed in the favourite occupation of his race, which is just sitting idly. Masterly inactivity is the Arab's strong point. No one can excel him in the art of doing nothing. So if a customer does come to buy, our shopkeeper is ready to bargain without heat, almost without showing any interest in the result; and if the

prospective purchaser goes away without buying, the tradesman subsides almost with relief.

The only thing that ever really arouses him is a quarrel with the competing shopkeeper next door. Then, indeed, our friend really comes to life. The two shout abuse, splutter, shriek insults and shake their fingers at each other, sometimes—but it must be a really frenzied quarrel—going so far as to rise to their feet and continue the dispute standing. There may be a customer or two waiting—the tradesmen do not care. And, indeed, the intending purchaser does not protest; for he takes a lively interest in the quarrel, probably joins in it without knowing the cause and cares nothing about the delay. As suddenly as the storm arose it dies away; the two disputants subside into their normal squatting position and attend to business. And the interested observers, which include all the neighbouring shopkeepers, heave sighs of disappointment at the ending of the entertainment. When the evening falls all the tradesmen slide down to the ground from their perches, slip their bare feet into the leather *babouches* lying on the ground before their shops, pull down the hooked-up shutter over the opening, padlock it and shuffle away to a café or eating-house.

These places of entertainment are certainly not luxurious. Stoop your head and enter through this low door standing invitingly open. You step down a foot or two on to the earthen floor. The interior is so dark that at first on coming in out of the brilliant sunlight you can see nothing. Then you discover that it is an Arab café. On a high brick fireplace a pot of coffee is boiling over a handful of charcoal. A lean Moslem in a dirty *barricano* dips the thick black liquid out with a long-handled measure, from which he pours it into little cups which are handed by a smutty-faced boy to customers squatting on soiled mats on the earthen floor. And for the small copper coin it costs them they have purchased the right to rest for hours, their backs propped against the walls.

As in most Oriental towns, shops of the same trade keep together. So here one alley is the Brassworkers' Street, bright with the shining metal, and in every cubby-hole a man hammering at a brass tray or a bowl, a lamp or a tall-stemmed food dish with its conical cover. In another lane are the tailors, and in each little shop a man sits on the floor and plies his needle, or, if he is more up-to-date, works a small sewing machine. In the next alley the cobblers congregate and piles of *babouches* are heaped—some the plain slippers of men, some gaily ornamented or worked with dainty patterns in gold or silver thread. These latter, of course, are for women's little feet.

Here is the Street of the Dyers. Before each shop are several huge earthenware pots filled with steaming liquids of different

colours—reds, greens, blues, yellows. And into these the dyers, faces splashed to the eyebrows and arms stained to the elbows, plunge lengths of silk or woollen materials.

In this narrow arcade, roofed over to keep out the hot sunshine, are other shops, some larger than the usual dimensions so that there is actually room for one or two customers to enter and stand at their ease, while the proprietor lifts down from shelves and spreads out rolls of gay, beautifully-hued silks to make costly garments for ladies hidden in the dull-looking houses around. Here is a shop with a glass front which displays jewellery—necklaces, bracelets, anklets, brooches, amulets, filigree rings, in gold or silver, all in Oriental designs, to adorn rich Arab ladies, whose indoor toilettes and adornments will never be seen by any men except their own husbands. And that does not mean a large amount of male admiration; for each woman has but a quarter-share in her spouse; as if he is wealthy he has probably taken full advantage of his Prophet's permission to marry four wives. He certainly would need to have money to spend if he is to bring presents from the shop into his harem. Or from the one opposite, which displays, really displays, the attractive wares it sells—long-fringed silk shawls of many colours, silver-spangled muslin, silk-brocade boleros, bodices, skirts—pink, blue, yellow—and velvet-covered leather waist-belts with solid gold buckles and heavy with gold bullion.

I always wondered who does the actual buying of these lovely objects, for one never sees any of the well-to-do women for whom they are intended actually shopping. Perhaps the dealers, like the "box-wallahs" in India, bring their stocks to the houses to enable the ladies to make their purchases in the privacy of their homes.

The residence of a rich Arab in the native quarter of Tripoli is very deceptive if it is judged only from the outside. From the street one sees merely a high blank wall, with a little door usually kept closely shut. But were it opened it would show a small, sunlit, tiled courtyard, often with an old well with pulley, rope and bucket in the centre, although the Italians have provided the town with running water. Across the court is the house with wooden-railed balconies, supported on carved columns, along its front. These are reached by a narrow staircase from the ground floor, and on them open the doors and windows of the rooms. These latter may have elaborate old chandeliers of brass and cut glass, but now fitted with electric bulbs, old Turkish or modern Italian furniture, and stiff chairs merely for show, because the inhabitants of the house prefer to seat themselves on heaped-up cushions or soft divans. The walls are adorned with highly coloured oleographs of the Mosque of St Sophia in Stamboul or of the Kaaba in Mecca, with Arabic inscriptions. In recesses

in the sleeping chambers are wide-canopied Turkish beds ; and piles of folded blankets and coverlets are heaped in corners.

European women would consider the daily life of the Arab ladies in such a house very dull and monotonous. For they have no interests outside their houses, no freedom of movement and, except for the weekly visit to the cemetery or to the baths, are not permitted to go out—and when they do pass through the streets they must hurry along, never loiter, and be muffled up always in their cloaks with only one eye showing. They are allowed no public amusement and are deprived of all male society, except as much as their husbands choose to give them—and that is not much. Their happiest hours are spent on the roof after dark, when the cool night succeeds the hot day and they can loll on cushions and, casting aside their veils if certain that no male eye can see them, they exchange gossip with their friends on the neighbouring roofs. In the daytime their idle hours, and they are all idle, are passed in the company of their sister wives—and one can imagine that *that* companionship may not always be desirable. Their one pleasure is in wearing their attractive costumes or criticising those of the other occupants of the harem. Certainly, for those who love beautiful things, these costume must give pleasure merely to behold. A wealthy Arab woman's garments are exquisite. Over a chemise of the finest gauze she wears one or more fine silk vests—pink, mauve, red, blue—covered with gold or silver embroidery and ornamental buttons. With these go wide trousers of the finest silk, and a small velvet cap adorned with gold coins or seed-pearls. And, for jewellery, her wrists are covered with wide gold or silver bracelets, her ankles with anklets of the same metals, her henna-tipped fingers with filigree rings. Large ear-rings hang from her ears, a necklace of gold coins encircles her throat.

And in Tripoli many of these ornaments have long and perhaps terrible histories. For it must be remembered that in these old houses lived murderous pirates and their women ; and the owners of them to-day may be descended from some of these old scoundrels and have inherited the treasures stolen from princely palaces in Italy, Spain or France or torn from the fingers and necks of murdered women.

The contrast between the interior of such a dwelling as I have described and the dull alley in which it stands is great. In the next lane are wretched little shops catering for poor people. Here is a vegetable-seller's, and the proprietor dozes among piles of carrots and pumpkins of an incredible size. Next door is a baker, a powerfully-built negro, who sits beside an oven so large that it nearly fills the little shop. Outside, a group of Jewish children are waiting, each holding a board, on some of which are big lumps of dough, while others are empty. They push and

jostle each other to get near the door, their eyes fixed on the baker.

He suddenly opens the oven and thrusts in a long-handled wooden spade and draws out on it a large, flat crusty loaf which has a most appetising smell. This he places on the empty board eagerly held out by a small boy, accepts payment and then, taking the dough from another child, places it in the oven. For to-morrow is the Israelite Sabbath, and he is baking the bread for Jewish families.

From the small doorway of a dark, low-ceilinged room, its floor below the level of the street, comes a continuous, harsh, grinding sound. A glance into the dim, cavernous interior shows a great ungainly beast moving in a circumscribed circle. After a longer look and when the eye grows used to the obscurity the strange animal turns out to be a blindfolded camel harnessed to a long beam fixed to millstones in the middle of the room which grind grain as the poor beast moves round and round, undriven, never halting, while the flour falls on to a cloth spread on the floor. From time to time a man enters to gather up the flour and drop a fresh supply of grain into the hopper.

In these narrow lanes one must walk with caution. Although wheeled traffic seldom uses them, you risk being crushed against a wall by a string of camels, padding noiselessly behind you in the dust and loaded down with huge sacks of wool or piles of firewood, if there is not a convenient open door to draw into.

At the corner of an alley an old Arab in a grimy *barricano* is bending over a low trestle table on which he has set out a pile of flat, crusty loaves just bought from the near-by baker. Two or three Arab or negro women and a few children have gathered to buy from him. They are joined by several dark-complexioned European housewives, Maltese and Sicilian, whose poverty forces them to buy in the cheapest market and avoid the Italian shops, where prices are too high for their slender purses. They live in the Turkish town in apartment houses that can be distinguished from the Arabs' residences by windows that open on to the street.

Their lives here among the Moslems are much as they would be in their native lands.

Near the Jewish quarter the ruins of the crenelated city wall, built in the days of the Byzantine Empire and rebuilt in the sixteenth century A.D. by the Spaniards, stand up over a fine promenade along by the sea. On the other side of the town is an open space in which the caravans park when they reach the end of their toilsome journey from the desert. Behind begin the gardens of the oasis, with its million and a quarter palm-trees, under which grow fruit-trees, below which are luxuriant crops of vegetables. Here are enclosures of high walls of sun-dried bricks; in some of these are held the markets—one in which

herds of camels are to be sold ; into another a flock of sheep from the mountains is being driven for sale. Scores of slipshod men in dirty *barricani* bargain over the animals, haggling and arguing over the prices until their voices rise to an angry shriek. In and out of throngs moves a strange figure, closely followed by an interested group of gaping children. He is dressed in a jacket of small, moth-eaten skins and ragged cotton trousers, his face hidden by a fur mask with eye-holes, and a hairy cap rising up into a pointed crown from which sticks up a bunch of feathers. Dangling from various parts of his body by short lengths of string are withered hens' claws, bones of small animals and the skulls of birds, like a Central African witch-doctor. Suspended from his neck by a cord hangs a large drum, on which he beats with a curved stick while he sings in a cracked voice to this monotonous accompaniment. The children follow and listen with enjoyment as he wanders from group to group, holding out his hand for coppers.

Beyond the markets lie the long vistas of the interminable aisles between the slender palm-trees ; and further out glimpses of ribbed sand reveal the yellow desert that encircles Tripoli.

MOSQUE AND MOSLEM, NEGRO AND JEW

TRIPOLI is indeed a Moslem city. That is evident at the first sight of the forest of minarets rising from the maze of houses, old and new; minarets of the mosques built for the worship of Allah in the past centuries by pious Mahommedans or by guilty ones seeking his pardon for their sins. Although none of the mosques themselves are architecturally beautiful their slender white shafts relieve the monotonous expanse of flat roofs in the ancient town. Few works of the hands of men are as graceful as these slim pillars springing up like lighthouses on a low coast—indeed, their name is derived from the word *minar*, which means “lighthouse,” and they are supposed to be copied from the celebrated Pharos of Alexandria, the first lighthouse.

Their purpose is use, not ornament, however. It is said that when Mahommed formulated his new religion he was at a loss to know how to summon his followers to prayer in the mosque. What was he to use? Bells?—no, the Christians had appropriated them. Conch-shells?—the Brahmin priests utilised them. What was left him? At last he thought of employing the human voice. The idea was at least original. But those who were to call their fellow-men must be placed at a height above the houses so that their voices could float out unimpeded to all. For this towers would be needed; and, as each would only have to support one man, it would only require to be slender as well as tall. And thus these graceful shafts that adorn the mosques came to be born to delight the eyes of all who see them rising up against the sky over Eastern cities.

They have many fashions; but none I know are as attractive as the fragile, green-tipped pillars seen in the bright sunshine of Tripoli. They are nearly all of the Turkish pattern, copied from Persian models.

There are many mosques in this Mediterranean town. One was originally a Christian church; but after the departure of the Spaniards in the sixteenth century it was turned to Moslem purposes. Another was the Chapel Royal of a ruler of Tripoli, the family church of the Caramanli dynasty, it might be called. Ahmed Pasha Caramanli built it when he reigned from 1714; and it served his descendants well into the nineteenth century. And beside it many of them now lie buried.

It is surrounded by an outer wall, against which all day and every day sit a small number of men busily engaged in making

caps, the small white caps worn in this city by men of the poorer class, instead of the red fezzes, which are more expensive, because they come from Europe. In this wall is a little gate, and through this from the outside world will pass every day a dignified figure, a white-bearded man dressed in a black silk coat worn open over a long, yellowish-brown gown, with a small white turban on his head. He is the Imam or spiritual director of the mosque, who acts as a guide to its congregation and conducts the Friday weekly services. He is not a priest, for the Mahommedans have no priests, but only officials of the mosques, each of whom has his proper functions, like this man.

Inside the wall is a courtyard, in which is a cloister running down the sides of the sacred building. A portion of it is railed off and contains a number of small tombs which hold former members of the Caramanli family, distant relatives, I presume, of the deceased Pasha, because out among the palm-groves of the oasis surrounding Tripoli stand the white tombs of the burial place of Ahmed Pasha Caramanli himself and his nearest of kin. The headstones here in the courtyard show the sex of the occupant of each grave; for in accordance with Mahommedan custom the tops of those of males are carved into the shape of turbans.

Out of the court rises the slender grace of the minaret, exquisitely white and slender against the deep sapphire-blue sky. Inside it a narrow winding staircase leads to a small doorway near the top, which opens out on a narrow gallery running round the minaret and guarded by a parapet. This affords a fine view over the battered ramparts of the Castello, the calm water of the port, the sea of foliage of the feathery tops of thousands of palm-trees in the oasis. The eye ranges over the massive white blocks of the new Italian buildings, the pretty villas in their luxuriant gardens, the splendid bulk of the Cathedral, the domes of the Governor's Palace. Then it travels out beyond the harbour to the shining Mediterranean stretching to the horizon, dotted with white sails or smudged by the trailing smoke of a steamer.

Up to this gallery five times a day another bearded man climbs wearily; for the stairs are steep and he is not young. He is also an official of the mosque, the *muezzin*, whose duty it is to remind the Faithful to worship God as and when the Prophet commanded that they should. So before and after dawn, at noon, when day is done and after darkness has fallen he goes out on to the little gallery and to all points of the compass he cries out in a high-pitched voice that carries far the Call to Prayer—"Allah is Allah. God is God, Mahommed is His Prophet." Out over the sleeping or the working city float the sacred words, bidding all men pray to their Creator.

And at the same moment on all the galleries of the many minarets around, tiny, doll-like figures appear; and the cry is

re-echoed from one end of the city to another, indeed from one end of the Mahommedan world to the other, through Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, to the Atlantic Ocean on the west, and to the east through every land where the name of the Prophet is honoured.

His duty done the *muezzin* descends slowly to the courtyard. It is noonday now and he has some hours of repose before he must climb again. As he reaches the court a group of Arabs enter it, men ragged, travel-stained, covered with thick dust from head to foot. For they have come far. A thousand miles or more perhaps; they are camel-drivers of a caravan just arrived from some distant oasis in the Sahara or the Sudan. And before they rest or refresh themselves they come here to give thanks to Allah for bringing them safely to their journey's end. They are ignorant men, evil-doers, perhaps. There may be blood on their hands, for human life is cheap in the desert. Yet still deep in their hearts is implanted the feeling that there is One above them to whom gratitude is due.

In the courtyard near the base of the minaret is the ablution basin with water flowing freely into it and out again—a shocking waste it must seem to these wayfarers to whom often a cupful of the precious liquid would mean the difference between life and death. But they must use it now to obey the law of the Prophet, who has ordained that before they offer a prayer to Allah they must cleanse their faces, hands and feet. In the desert where there is no water they use sand instead. But here, through the action of the white infidels who ruled the city, water is plentiful. So they gather it up in both hands, splash it liberally over their faces, plunge their grimy arms to the elbows in it, then, slipping off their worn shoes, wash their feet as well. And, having obeyed Mahommed's law, they range their *babouches* side by side near the door and enter the sacred edifice.

Many of the Prophet's ordinances, like this injunction to perform their ablutions, have a good sound reason of hygiene behind them. In the East it is usually the custom to enter bare-foot into a house or the presence of a superior. A man going to worship would naturally cast off his shoes and might then bring in pollution or a disease germ on his soles. And as in a mosque all prostrate themselves and kiss the ground they might thus very easily absorb the deadly germ.

Similarly Mahommed's veto on eating pig is meant, as in the Mosaic law, to avoid the flesh of an unclean, foul-feeding animal, which in the East harbours many diseases. And again, the injunction of both Jewish and Moslem lawgivers that no meat should be eaten from any beast that has not been "let blood" while alive is a preventive against putrid carrion being devoured.

The camel-drivers, as they washed themselves, knew nothing

of the reason for their being enjoined to do so. It was enough that the Prophet had ordered it. So without further thought, having finished their ablutions, they entered the mosque and for a few minutes stared about them in admiring wonder. They gazed in awed silence at the many-coloured marbles, the vistas of white pillars supporting the springing arches that held up the ceiling, the beauty of the *mimbar*, the pulpit, with its marble staircase, the colours of the tessellated walls, the rich hues of the great rug spread near the east wall, the great marabout candles on either side of the richly adorned niche that points to the worshippers the direction in which lies the Holy City of Mecca, towards which they must turn when they pray. To these ignorant desert-dwellers the interior of this building is very beautiful. Hitherto the only mosques that they have seen are those of Saharan oases, which are roughly shaped of blocks of mud dried in the sun. So to their dazzled eyes this temple seems well fit to be an earthly habitation for Allah.

To others the mosque might not appear so magnificent. Like all these sacred buildings of the Moslems it was bare of any furniture except the pulpit. The floor was littered with praying-mats. From the ceiling hung a chandelier now fitted with electric lamps; and on the right was a small gallery, to which the ladies of Ahmed Pasha Caramanli were hidden behind screens, although women are usually not permitted to take part in Mahommedan services.

After the camel-drivers had gaped awhile they remembered the purpose for which they had come. They dropped on their knees, bowed low, then fell on their faces and lay prostrate, while they uttered a few short, incorrectly-phrased prayers, or what they meant to be prayers. They rose, genuflected, rose, prostrated themselves and performed all the prescribed movements. Their devotions did not last long. They stood up to go; but still they were held by the beauty around them. They tried to fix a picture of this lovely shrine in their minds, something that they could tell their friends in their Saharan village of mud huts when they got home again. Finally they left the building silently, recovered their shoes and passed out into the street.

Nearly every mosque of Tripoli, unlike the generally received idea of the architecture of such buildings, has a number of small cupolas in line on the roof instead of one large central dome.

The Caramanli is not the largest mosque in Tripoli. That distinction belongs to the Gurgi, which is reached from the Castello by the old street known as the Suk el Turk, which is lined by shops on either side and is protected against the heat of the sun by being completely roofed over, with an opening in the centre to admit air. This custom is very common in Tunis and in Fez. Near the end of this shady street is an open space

in which, confronting the Gurgi Mosque with its two-galleried minaret, stands a much older memorial of Tripoli's former greatness. It is a four-fronted marble arch erected in honour of the Emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus in A.D. 163 by C. Calpurnius Celsus. For Tripolitania was part of the Roman Empire then. Under this arch in those days met the two most important streets of Oea. And perhaps it has stood in the same spot for all those many hundreds of years. When the Italians came they found it degraded into sheltering a vegetable stall ; but these descendants of Ancient Rome, as they claim to be, restored it to respect. They threw out the vegetables and cleared the ground around, so that the old monument stands in the centre of a little square ; they restored it as well as they could and put a roof over the broken stones on the summit. Traces of former sculptures are still visible on it. It is marvellous that it should be as well preserved as it is after all the changes of fortune that Tripoli has seen since its erection.

To-day this typical monument of Ancient Rome looks strangely out of place in its Arab-Turkish surroundings. Yet, when on Fridays the *muezzin's* voice rings out from the minaret opposite in the Call to Prayer and in answer to it scores of white-clad men shuffle silently past the arch of the Stoic Emperor with their *barricani* flung gracefully over their left shoulders, they look strangely like Roman senators draped in the folds of their classic togas.

In the streets and *suks* of Tripoli many negroes are to be seen ; for they form a not inconsiderable portion of the inhabitants. They are not recent importations into the city, but are descendants of slaves long ago brought in from the Sahara or the Sudan. It will be noticed that, while retaining their colour, they have to a large extent lost the typical features of their race, the thick lips and the flat noses. This is due to much intermarriage with the Arabs and the Berbers—who have never heard of the colour bar. To-day these black men are free and follow any trade or occupation they please ; for there is no slavery in Tripolitania, unlike in Morocco where it still exists, and where even to-day in the houses of the great Sherefian nobles may be seen human beings wearing silver collars to proclaim them the absolute property of their masters.

Naturally in Tripoli the negroes form a more or less separate community, which retains many of their old customs. In religion they adhere mostly to Mahommedanism, a faith which has been handed down to them for generations, and one which spreads farther every day into the heart of Africa. It appeals to the coloured races for several reasons—the simplicity of its creed, the easily understandable carnal attractions that it offers in the future life, the equality of all men under the Koran, and the exact

knowledge of the amount of taxes that they will be called upon to pay under Moslem rulers.

The negroes of Tripoli have their own festivals and honour them in their own way, while, of course, joining in the celebrations of the feasts observed universally by their co-religionists. They keep the fast of the month of Ramadan and share in the Bakri Id.

But one, peculiarly their own, occurs in the month of March and is kept in their own way and in their own special mosque, which stands in the desert outside the walls of the city. For days before the date the streets of Tripoli are enlivened at odd hours by small parties of negroes marching in procession with flags, music and songs, skipping and dancing maybe as they go, and keeping up their festivities far into the night.

But when the blessed day arrives the whole negro population leaves the town, streaming out of the gates in hurrying crowds. Throngs of men tramp out in the dust, youths and boys speed out on bicycles with their *barricani* streaming in the wind—and these are not ideal garments for cycling. Women muffled up in voluminous cloaks and shawls with, as usual, one eye in each face visible, their shapeless black legs the only other part of their anatomies visible, shuffle in their loose slippers over the heavy sand. Most of them drag ebony-faced children at their heels; or perhaps a quaint little black face peeps out of the folds of a mantle. A few prouder, or more prosperous, than the rest disdain to walk and drive out in shabby hired victorias packed with stout mothers and squalling infants.

The crowds stream out into the sandy plain beyond the walls and head for a white-domed mosque, around which it seems as if the entire negro population is gathering. This is their own particular mosque; and the day's celebration centres about it. A space in the centre of the gathering is left clear, and here the poles of two large coloured flags tipped with brass globes are stuck deep in the sand. And near them a small band of black-faced musicians are seated on the ground, beating out a rapid rhythm on hand-drums like large tambourines. And to the simple sounds a number of men in red fezzes, with bright-coloured waistcoats over loose white cotton shirts and trousers are dancing—dancing madly. In frenzy they hop and jump towards and away from each other, rushing in and leaping back again, whirling frantically, until one by one they drop exhausted to the ground, foaming at the mouth like epileptics. And as each one falls another from the crowd springs in and takes his place until he, too, gives in. And the lookers-on clap and urge them on to further exertions and encourage fresh dancers to join in. It is a dance such as would be seen in villages in the heart of equatorial Africa, or such as I have witnessed in the market-places of the Cities of the Confederation of the Beni-M'Zab in the Sahara, when grave and solemn-

faced middle-aged Mozabites—who for years had sat behind the counters of small grocers' shops in Algiers—were carried away in mad excitement, sprang high into the air, threatened each other with knives in mimic combat, and fell senseless to the earth.

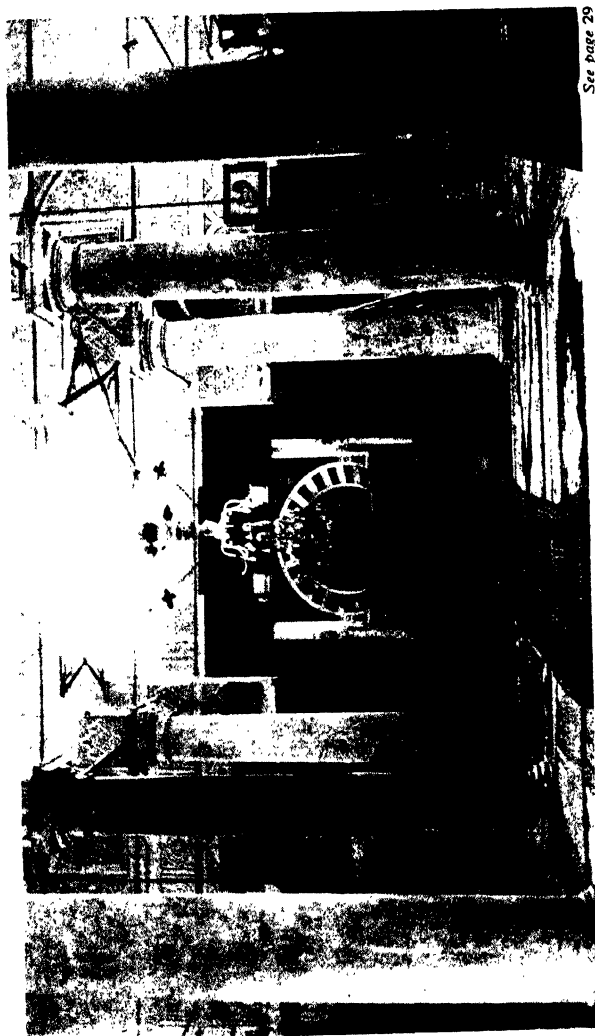
Now, at this negro festival, when at last all the dancers are exhausted, and not until then, the dance comes to an end. Then the crowd scatters to leave a clear space for the negresses to assemble before the mosque. They have apparently cast aside their habitual modesty and bared their faces to the gaze of all. They are very black. Many are old, most are fat, some very fat indeed. But necks, bosoms and arms are loaded with solid gold or silver jewellery—necklaces, chains, bracelets. Their fingers are covered with rings, large rings hang from their ears.

They press forward in a dense throng into the courtyard of the mosque, then rush the door of the building, which this day is given up to them entirely, no men being admitted. This is very unusual, because as a rule women are not allowed to enter a mosque. In the famous old Karouine in Fez, perhaps the most sacred in the Moroccan Empire, the nearest they may approach it is to be permitted to kiss the lintel. Mahommedans of the old school hold that women have no souls to be saved.

But to-day the dusky ladies do not remain long inside the sacred building. They emerge in the same unruly way in which they entered it. They move in a mob towards the spot where the two flags are planted. Two stalwart females pull the staves out of the sand and hoist them on their shoulders; behind them all the other women form up in procession and, headed by the hand-drum band, march off towards the gate of the city. Many of the male spectators fall in with them, while the rest scatter over the ribbed sand pinned down by creeping green plants and go on their way, the day's ceremony being ended. The carriage folk climb into their ramshackle victorias and drive off in state.

But all through the night parties of negroes parade through the streets, singing, dancing and keeping the fun going until the dawn of a new day warns them that the festival is over.

Among the other elements of the population of Tripoli is one that is at least the second oldest—the Jews. Out of a total of 70,000 they number 15,000. They came here long before either Arabs or Turks set foot in Africa, because they are descended from the Hebrew managers and employees of the trading stations founded by the Phœnician merchants. A fresh accession of members of their race was received when the fall of Jerusalem scattered the survivors of its inhabitants over the coasts of the Mediterranean. And through the troubled centuries of Tripoli's history they endured, prospered. Even its occupation by the Spaniards and the Knights of St John, both fanatical persecutors



See page 29

THE MOSQUE OF CARAMANLI PASHA

Photo by the Author



Photo by the Author

THE MOSQUE OF THE NEGROES
THE FESTIVAL OF THE NEGRESSES

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of the Jews, or the oppressive rule of blood-sucking, avaricious Turkish pashas, did not crush them out of existence. After the Italian conquest in the twentieth century they must have thought their troubles over. They did not reckon with Mussolini's subservience to Hitler's rabid anti-Semitism.

If, when passing through the native town, one comes upon a district where at the open windows and in the doorways of the whitewashed houses are seen unveiled women in attractive Eastern costumes gossiping with their neighbours or calling out greetings to passing acquaintances, you may know that this is the Jewish quarter. Although the men in it wear red fezzes and their shirts hang outside their trousers—the mark of the Oriental, Kipling called it—their Hebraic features proclaim their race.

The Jewesses are surprisingly light-complexioned, much fairer than the Sicilian and Maltese women living near them. When young many are quite pretty; but with increasing years they tend to grow fat.

The majority retain their picturesque Oriental dress, and on the Sabbath the dingy alleys are brightened by its vivid hues. They wear short-sleeved loose bodices of pink, blue, white or mauve or some other gay colour, and straight-hanging silk skirts, white, striped black and white or even some livelier shade. On their dark hair are laid bright silk lace-edged kerchiefs. Many go bare-legged and thrust their naked feet into heelless slippers, but some flaunt silk stockings and high-heeled shoes.

But the ladies of the richer and more modernised families have adopted European dress and manners, and their girls might have been seen in smart toilettes at receptions and balls in the Club of Jewish Youth dancing with Italian officers, as well as with young men of their own race in lounge suits or dinner jackets.

But the majority of the Jews are faithful to their own ways and Oriental dress—the long shirt hanging outside the trousers, a sleeveless waistcoat worn open over it, a single-breasted coat reaching to below the knees and the red fez, with bare legs and feet thrust into *babouches* or else wearing cotton socks and European boots or shoes.

In the country districts many Jews adopt the complete Arab costume. As in Morocco, several of the trades are almost exclusively in Jewish hands, such as cobbling, perfumery, making jewellery and working in iron and precious metals. Agriculture and stock-raising are left to Arabs and Berbers.

As elsewhere in North Africa the Jews are anxious that their children should receive a good education and will stint themselves to give it to their sons, particularly. They have some excellent schools of their own and send their boys to Government

schools. One may often see a "crocodile" of small Hebrews in the prescribed scholastic dress, which is not unlike an Italian naval officer's uniform.

But all this was before the Duce began to imitate the Führer in hounding the Jews.

THE STORY OF TRIPOLI

TO-DAY the desert sands of Tripolitania meet the sea. But in the dawn of history great forests, instead, stretched down to the shores of the Mediterranean; and in them roamed elephants and other wild beasts that to-day are only found in the interior of Africa. The scattered inhabitants lived by hunting or scratched a bare subsistence from the soil in the small clearings round the sparse groups of huts. Yet among the trees were paths that were more than chance animal trails winding aimlessly between the trunks. For each had a definite purpose of its own and came from the heart of the continent a thousand miles and more from the sea. And on it at long intervals moved parties of black men armed with bows and flint-headed arrows, weapons as strange to the coastal inhabitants as were the men themselves, for the natives of these forests were fair-skinned and their only arms were throwing javelins and stone knives.

But these negroes were not coming for war, but escorted trains of small sturdy oxen, like the *zebus* of to-day, bearing pack-saddles which carried the riches of Africa already coveted by the people of Europe—ivory, ostrich feathers, gold. And these caravans brought their loads from the deserts, and the tropical lands, not for the poor forest-dwellers near the coast, but for the traders who came to meet them from far over the sea, from fabled lands near the rising sun, sailing in strange ships manned by swarthy, loud-voiced sailors who told to anyone who could understand even a little of their talk thrilling tales of spouting monsters of the deep, of terrible storms and of great cities of marble palaces in which the wealth of the world was garnered.

For the time was sixteen hundred years before the coming of Christ and the adventurous merchants were Phœnicians, men of Tyre and Sidon who, in their frail boats that yet seemed so large to the few fishermen along the coast in their tiny canoes, had already at that early age established contact with negro traders from unknown countries deep in the interior. Countries where innumerable herds of wild elephants wandered at will in dense jungles—elephants far bigger than their degenerate kindred living in the coastal regions—or where, on vast steppes, great armies of ostriches swept over the sand. And, spurred on by the lure of gain, these merchants of Asia Minor risked their lives on stormy seas to barter cloth and trinkets of little value for the natural products of equatorial regions.

But this system of chance meetings with the caravans was not a good one ; for a ship might arrive on the harbourless shore to find no one to meet it and be unable to wait if the weather was stormy. Or, on the other hand, a consignment of goods might reach the rendezvous only for its porters to learn that gales had kept the foreign merchants away ; and the negroes were not popular enough with the lighter-skinned coastal dwellers to be tempted to stay long in their territory.

So the men of Sidon and Tyre took counsel and decided to do something that another seafaring nation, the English, did many centuries later in another continent, establish trading-posts in which the goods imported from Phœnicia and those to be exported in return could be collected and held. Therefore they created on the coast of Tripolitania three such depots, which, beginning in a small way, became three towns, of which two exist to this day. They were named Leptis Magna, Sabratha and Oea—of which the last developed into the most important and became Tripolis (Three Cities), or Tripoli, as it is now called. And that is how the present capital of Tripolitania came into being so long ago.

It and its sisters prospered and grew with the years. But not to the same extent, for Tripoli surpassed the others. At first their inhabitants were only Phœnician merchants, their staffs and families—and their Jewish managers, for in their own country the two races had much in common, understood each other's language and got on well together in business. But soon new colonists flocked to them from overseas as agents, tradesmen, servants. And folk of the near-by forest villages gradually gathered to work for them at the most menial tasks. So the Three Cities grew.

Their citizens remained faithful to the land of their origin, its language, customs and faith. Although they were independent and owed no allegiance to either Sidon or Tyre yet they remained true Phœnicians. They kept the same religion, they worshipped the same gods. They built temples to the deities of their ancestors. Their shrines housed, besides the effigies of many godlings, the great images of their sacred Trinity—the terrible Moloch, or Baal-Ammon ; Tanit, the Virgin Goddess of the Moon and of the Heavens ; and Eshmun. Tanit was represented as a beautiful woman crowned with wheat-ears, Baal as an old man with ram's ears and accompanied by a ram. But his dreadful worship flourished in its most appalling form, the sacrifice of living children. The mothers of Tripoli, urged by fanaticism and excited by the frenzied applause of their fellow-idolators, thrust their own screaming babies into his brazen arms and watched them drop into the furnace below.

In the ninth century B.C. a momentous event occurred in a

neighbouring country which was to have great and lasting influence on the future life of Tripoli. It is a story known to countless generations of schoolboys the world over through the pages of the Roman poet Virgil. The tale of Dido, into which Aeneas was introduced by poetical licence, but which, leaving out the faithless lover, is a true one. Hitherto the Phœnician colonies on the North African coasts began as planned trade settlements and grew with their commerce. But now one was born in a very different way, one that was to prove the greatest, the richest, the ruler of them all.

In 850 B.C. Elissar, daughter of King Mathan of Tyre, fled from her native city to escape the tyranny of her brother Pygmalion. With a faithful band of followers she secretly fitted out a small expedition and sailed along the shores of the Mediterranean, steering west. She passed the Tripolitanian coast and finally arrived at a great bay farther on, where, centuries before, a small trading-post called Cambé had been founded. It had never flourished. But, disembarking near it, she persuaded the local chieftain to sell her "as much land as a bull's hide would cover." Then, so the story goes, the artful woman cut the hide into narrow strips and with them encircled a commanding hill over the sea. Then she kept the astonished chief to his bargain and built a citadel on this hill. However, whatever the truth of the tale may be, Elissar, nicknamed "Dido," which means "the fugitive," founded her settlement here on the shores of the Gulf of Tunis; and it rose in time to be a second, indeed a greater, Tyre.

By the sixth century B.C. Carthage—the name was derived from Karthadshat, which means "the new city"—was the capital of the state which comprised three districts, Zeugitania, Byzacium and the Emporia, which stretched to the centre of the Gulf of Sirte at the eastern end of Tripolitania—it would reach to about the El Agheila of to-day. Thus it included the three towns Tripoli, Leptis Magna and Sabratha. For, on the destruction of the Mother City, Tyre, by Nebuchanessar, King of Babylon, Carthage took her place as Queen of the Mediterranean and protector of all the Tyrian colonies in it. For, threatened with war by the Greeks, they all hurried to come under her shield.

Thus the much older Tripolitanian towns became subject to their powerful sister; and thenceforth their fortunes were linked with hers. But they were permitted to rule themselves in their own way. Their system of government was similar to that of Carthage, which in its turn was a copy of Tyre's. All might be described as aristocratic plutocracies. Tripoli had two magistrates called *suffetes* and a small senate. The natives of the country had no voice and were merely "hewers of wood and drawers of

water." Their chief occupation was to cultivate the soil and provide food for the citizens of Phœnician descent.

The town lived and flourished by its commerce, for Tripolitania had the lion's share of the trade with Central Africa because it was at the sea end of the shortest and best-watered caravan route, which crossed the desert at its narrowest, an advantage which continues to this day. In that age the inhabitants of the Sahara and the Sudan were pure negroes, for the lighter-skinned races like the Berbers of North Africa and the Arabs had not begun to invade those territories and cross-breed there. The animals used in the caravan traffic in the beginning were small oxen, like the modern *zebus*, with pack saddles. But more powerful substitutes were later found in elephants outside of the desert zone, for these thirsty beasts could not be employed to cross the Sahara. North of it the local breed in the coastal forests was used. These animals were smaller and more degenerate than those of the equatorial regions. Herds of them inhabited the Atlas Mountains in the summer months, coming down to the lower and warmer levels in winter, like the Indian elephants in the Terai, which retreat into the Himalayas in the hot weather and descend to the jungles in the cold.

The camel did not appear on the African scene until much later. He first made his appearance in Egypt in the sixth century B.C. But not until the days of the Roman Empire was he introduced into Tripolitania, where he proved to be the ideal animal for the caravans, owing to his endurance and capacity for going without water for days. In these new regions the camels bred freely and were later found in thousands in the region now known as the Fezzan.

But previous to their coming the ox and the elephant made the exchange of commerce between the interior of Africa and its coast possible. The latter beast was first employed in war in the third century B.C., and students of history will remember Hannibal's use of elephants in his invasion of Italy.

For many years the Tripolitaniāns lived a life of tranquil security, protected against foreign foes by the power of Carthage, which now had a population of about a million and in war-time hired a large army of mercenaries. It possessed as well a trained body of young volunteers of good family, which formed an officers' corps. Tripoli was not called upon to do more than raise its quota of mercenaries from the native tribes in her dominions when the need arose. In Carthage's campaigns against the Greeks in Sicily the Tripolitaniāns took little part.

One contribution to the war effort that they made was when the reserves of fighting elephants of their protector were depleted and her forests emptied by the drain on them of the army's demands, Tripoli came to her aid. Her hunters went out into

her jungles to build big circular stockades and drive into them her own herds and sort out from them the bull elephants to be sent to her great ally to carry on their backs the war-towers into battle. The great beasts were despatched by sea or driven over the coast track to the great city to be trained to fight.

But more than this was required of the people of Tripoli when Carthage waged the three Punic Wars with her implacable enemy Rome from 268 B.C. to 146 B.C., with the bloody struggle against her own disbanded and unpaid mercenaries and her nine years' attempt to conquer Spain thrown in for ample measure. In these the soft-living Tripolitani were called upon to serve in the Carthaginian armies and suffered heavily before the final victory of Rome blotted Carthage out of existence. Tripoli's insignificance proved her salvation and lightened the punishment of the conquerors.

But her independence was gone. All Tripolitania was now only a fraction of the new Roman African colony that was created. In the years that followed the destruction of Carthage Tripoli was content to be allowed to exist. The exactions of her new masters nearly ruined her, but eventually she was a gainer by the change of rule. For the products of Africa were still in request; indeed, more than ever now that Rome was richer and more powerful than before and her fashionable ladies' demands more imperious than ever. So the caravan trade flourished and Tripoli prospered again.

And eventually a new Carthage, but now a Roman one, was born, and before long it was again a great city. The headquarters of the Governor of the colony was established in it, and when under the Empire Christianity triumphed, it became the seat of a bishopric and soon the breeding-place of many religious quarrels and heresies. Tripoli had its share of these, but the town was not large enough to harbour many people idle enough to occupy themselves with such things. At one period she was sunning herself in Imperial favour, for an Emperor of Rome had been born in Tripolitania and never forgot the land of his birth. It was Septimius Severus, a native of Leptis Magna, which was too small a town to occupy his whole attention, and he showered attentions and gifts on Tripoli instead.

Under the Empire North Africa was of great value to Rome, which exploited it mercilessly. It recruited cavalry from the Numidians, or Nomads, of the high tablelands and infantry from the sturdy peasants of the mountains and sent the latter to garrison Egypt and the former to serve in Pannonia, Germany and Belgium. But to guard her new possessions in Africa she stationed the 3rd Augustan Legion, six thousand strong, with headquarters at Lambessa in Algeria, and detachments spread all over the colony. Tripoli had a cohort quartered there permanently,

but it saw many Roman soldiers disembark in the harbour and march away inland to the Saharan zone of Tripolitania to which the conquerors had given the name Phasania, which in the course of centuries has become Fezzan.

The forests near Tripoli had gradually been thinned out, much of the land given over to agriculture ; and Tripolitania furnished its share of the 348,000 tons of corn that Barbary sent to Rome in a year. The town of Leptis Magna alone supplied it with three million tons of olive oil in a twelvemonth. And some of the trees still stand to this day in the groves of the Jebel. From the jungles came elephants and other wild beasts to make sport for the Roman populace in the Circus Maximus. Marbles and precious woods went to adorn the imperial palaces and the houses of the patricians. From the Fezzan were drawn camels, horses and ostriches. The caravans from the Sudan brought with them negro slaves for the great ladies of Rome, and gold and ivory for its wealthy citizens.

At first, under Roman rule Tripolitania attained a degree of agricultural, as well as commercial, prosperity such as it had never known. A good system of irrigation helped the scanty rainfall of the coastal zone to make the soil so productive that, in the words of the old authors, "under the palms grew olive-trees, under the olives fig-trees, under them pomegranates, under these vines and wheat—and when the wheat was reaped vegetables and then pot-herbs were cultivated ; and all in the same year."

But this prosperity brought no benefit to the people of the province. The Romans showed no gratitude to them for their labours. Corrupt colonial administrators plundered them. The rich merchants of Tripoli were robbed by the tax-collectors and their export and import trade gradually filched from them and diverted into Roman hands. The cultivators were deprived of their land, which was bought up by speculators and sold again to Latin and Greek colonists. The Berber peasants were forced into a state of slavery. Their strongest young men were conscripted to fill the ranks of the legions serving in Gaul, in Britain, in eastern Europe ; and none of them ever lived to return to their homes. The young women—for many Berber girls are very good-looking—were dragged from their families to amuse their Roman masters. Their forests were cut down ; the elephants were killed off for their ivory.

In Tripoli not only the merchants suffered. The builders, masons, artificers and carpenters were drafted away to erect the Roman circus and theatre at Sabratha and to build the magnificent palaces, public baths and the harbour at Leptis Magna under the whips of cruel taskmasters and eventually to die of starvation and disease. So townsfolk and agriculturists received similar brutal treatment and were filled with the same bitter feeling of

resentment and hate. In the Saharan province of Phasania the desert-dwellers were more fortunate, because the speed of their camels enabled them to escape the exactions of the tax-gatherers and the brutality of the legionaries, who could not overtake them when they fled from the oases into the desert. But even they had their just grievances.

So all classes, all races, of the people of Tripolitania were inflamed with hatred of their oppressors. But they were powerless. For they had no leaders, no weapons and, worst of all, no cohesion. They were prevented from uniting in a common effort by the tribal jealousies that had always divided the Berbers since they first came to Africa. And the city-dwellers of Phœnician origin had nothing in common with them but their enmity to the Romans. Nevertheless revolts did break out frequently, but always without success. They were bloodily repressed ; and hatred of their oppressors increased with the failure of each fresh attempt to free themselves.

They thought at last that the day of liberty and of vengeance had dawned when in A.D. 429 a rebellious Roman Governor of North Africa invited the King of the Vandals, a tribe of Germans who had wandered from the Baltic and been driven through Europe to Spain, to cross the Straits of Gibraltar and oust the Romans from their African colony. This they did ; and under their leader Gaiseric they successfully took possession of it all except Carthage, Hippo and Cirta. But these eventually fell into their hands ; and Gaiseric, who had become king on the death of his brother, took up his residence in Carthage and plundered Tripoli and all other parts of his new dominions.

But he started a fashion in North Africa that in later centuries was to be imitated there only too faithfully. He became the first Barbary pirate, built a powerful fleet and ravaged the coasts of the Mediterranean, plundered and sank all ships, and was even audacious enough to capture and loot Rome and carry off as his prisoners the widow and daughters of the late emperor.

The unfortunate Tripolitaniāns found that they had exchanged whips for scorpions. The rule of the Vandals was even more oppressive than that of the Romans had been ; but they had to endure it until A.D. 534, when Gaiseric's successor was overthrown by the Byzantine Emperor's famous general Belisarius, whom the Berbers joined eagerly.

But now the plight of the wretched Tripolitaniāns was worse than ever. The newcomers outdid their predecessors in tyranny ; and the state of their wretched subjects was seven times worse than the first. As all invaders had had one thing in common, Christianity, the Berbers learned to hate it. At first, when the Roman emperors persecuted it, the peoples of North Africa eagerly embraced it, but when it became the court religion they

abandoned it as quickly ; and finally, after their experience of Byzantine rule, they drifted back to idolatry or took to Judaism. The number of the Jews had been greatly increased when they were expelled from Palestine in the fourth century B.C. and again after the fall of Jerusalem in the second century A.D.

The stage was set in all North Africa for a great revolution, and the coming of a new invasion and another faith. In the seventh century after Christ Mahommedanism was born, and its followers burst out of Arabia and swept into neighbouring lands, offering death or Islam to all who confronted them. They made two incursions into Tunisia, in 641 and 665 ; and in 669 the Caliph of Bagdad sent a comrade of the dead Prophet, a fanatical warrior named Okba-ben-Mafa, to seize and govern the Province of Ifrikya, " The Land of Corn." This man, the Koran in one hand, a sword in the other, swept from Egypt through Cyrenaica into Tripolitania, being joined by thousands of Berbers, who took eagerly to the new religion.

And thus the Moslems came to Tripoli.

From Tripolitania Okba went on with his original small army of Arab warriors swelled by large bands of Berber recruits and crashed into Tunisia, which he overran and conquered almost without effort. His numbers increased every day, and he set his converts the task of building a new city with a giant mosque. He called it Kairouan and proclaimed it a holy city. He made it his headquarters and from it consolidated his conquest of Tunisia.

Next he led his victorious warriors into Algeria, where he met with little opposition and was everywhere welcomed by the Berbers, who eagerly joined the new religion, which made the same appeal to them as it had done to their compatriots. The rule of the Byzantine emperor and Christianity together vanished like a dream. The conquest of Algeria was as rapid as his triumphs in other countries had been.

Then he marched into Morocco and found it as easy a victim.

Finally he reached the shores of the Atlantic Ocean and could go no further. On the sandy beach he spurred his horse into the sea, then, reining up, held his naked sword aloft and called on Allah to witness that he had left none behind him to deny that God was God and Mahommed was his Prophet.

Wheeling his charger round he faced eastward and began his return march. Flushed with pride in his many victories, he abandoned all caution and rode well ahead of his army with only a bodyguard of three hundred men. But in the northern Algerian Sahara he fell into the ambush laid for him by the soldiers of a petty Berber queen and was slain. He sleeps to-day in a mosque in a little village near Biskra called after him Sidi Okba, where his tomb is a place of pilgrimage for pious Moslems, who crowd to it on every Friday.

But although his many conquests vanished with his death and the countries that he had seized disintegrated into scores of petty principalities and tribal territories, the religion that he had brought to them persisted, and from the Nile to the Atlantic Mahommedanism remains the victorious creed.

THE FURTHER HISTORY OF TRIPOLITANIA

JUST as the first wave of an incoming tide rushes in over the beach, then slowly slips back, leaving little pools and bits of jetsam behind until the next wave comes, so the first surge of the Arab tide swept over North Africa with Okba-ben-Mafa and receded when its force was spent, to gather strength for a second oncoming. That first wave of the Arabs had been really only a fierce rush of armed religious fanatics, and when its momentum was exhausted with the death of its leader it sank into the thirsty expanse of the Barbary States or left its jetsam—small pockets of the invaders and their new creed—here and there. After they had retired from Morocco and Algeria there was practically no trace of either to be found in those countries. But they had made more impression on Tunisia; and the Holy City of Kairouan still gathered its thousands of the new converts in the great mosque there. In this recently established town the Emir of the Caliph of Bagdad had just declared his independence and set up his own dominion from Tripolitania to the west of Algeria.

In Tripolitania, which had been first invaded, many Arabs and still more Mahommedan Berbers remained as a citadel of the Moslem religion to serve as a rallying-point for a second invasion, which would prove more permanent than the first. But here, as elsewhere, the stranded soldiers of a womanless army settled down in their new surroundings, took Berber wives and got merged in the aboriginal population. As that first invasion had swept the Byzantine power out of Africa, as this latter had done with its Vandal predecessors and as they with the Romans, while the Arab remnant was too small to set up a new empire in their place, all semblance of authority disappeared outside of the towns, to be succeeded in the interior by tribal rule—just little collections of the original Berbers under petty chiefs. They could not pull or hold together; each tribe fought with its nearest neighbour and there was no central government to unite them. It was chaos. Their quarrels and jealousies made them always ready to welcome and join any intruder who promised to aid them against their enemies of the moment. There is a saying that the country which has no history is the happiest. It was not so in this case. This city and land had none for nearly three hundred years; for there were no happenings in them that interested, not only anyone outside their borders, but also the majority of those inside them.

But in the eleventh century A.D. came an event that altered the face of things. It was the second tide of conquest, stronger and more permanent than the first. A fresh Moslem wave from the East swept over North Africa—the Hilalian Invasion it is called. It was the great incursion of the Beni-Hilal, “The Sons of Hilal,” nomad tribes from Upper Egypt and the Libyan wastes. They had been bribed to move west. And they went prepared to stay in the new lands that they were out to seek; for the warriors brought with them their wives, children, herds and flocks on their great migration. To the number of two hundred thousand, later to be a million, they flooded the lands to the west, Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, Tunisia, Algeria, even Morocco. Everywhere they passed or stayed they laid the countryside waste; for they burned the forests, or cut down the trees, clearing the land to provide pasturage for their camels, sheep and goats. And these last animals were almost as destructive as their masters, for they ate up everything green, killed every tree that men had spared, by nibbling the bark, and turned everything into a desert. The improvident nomads, who never thought of cultivating the earth, broke down the dams holding reserves of water and the walls of the channels that served to convey it to irrigate the crops, thus letting the precious liquid run to waste with no care for the morrow. These herdsmen took thought for the day only; for on the next they would strike their tents and move on to where fresh pastures awaited their flocks. Their improvidence was easy to understand, for a vast, illimitable continent seemed to stretch before them, its green riches inexhaustible.

At first the coming of the Moslem host was not resented by the country Berbers, whose lost faith was revived by the arrival of their co-religionists. But before long dissensions broke out between them, when the cultivators saw the ruining and devastation of their land. But their resentment was useless, for they were much inferior in numbers to the invaders, who swept them aside, robbed them of all that was portable, burned their villages, slew all who resisted and drove the survivors to take refuge in the mountains or in the distant wastes of the Sahara, to become there the fierce tribes of the Touareg, who to this day cherish undying enmity to all Arabs. The country was ruined. The destruction of the trees diminished the rainfall, the land dried up and sand replaced the loam.

In the towns on the coast it was different. Into Tripoli, many of the leaders of the Beni-Hilal, and others who tired of a wandering life, entered, took what they wanted, settled down in the houses, from which they drove the owners, delighting in the comfort and luxury which they had never known. They made slaves of the inhabitants.

Not all Arabs were mere ignorant savages, although they had

been little better when they burst out of the sandy wastes of Arabia and invaded countries of old civilisation. But from these they learned much. From China they acquired a knowledge of the compass, of paper and of gunpowder; from the Greeks of Alexandria, astronomy, physics, philosophy, medicine and mechanics. India taught them algebra and arithmetic. In turn the world got from them the Arabic numerals in place of the awkward Roman figures; and they themselves developed a knowledge of geography, mathematics and literature. As they spread into other countries and set up new kingdoms the monarchs they found to rule them engaged talented architects and sculptors to build and adorn their palaces. And they encouraged science, medicine, letters and arts. The Caliphs of Bagdad, the emirs in Spain, the Moslem sultans in Africa, embellished their capitals and built famous *medersas* and universities that attracted even Christian students. Fez and Marrakesh in Morocco, Tlemçen in Algeria, became famous for their schools and the learning of their scholars.

Tripoli was never large enough to be endowed with such great institutes of knowledge. It had become a completely Moslem city; it remains so to-day. Christianity died out with the passing of the Byzantine rule. Only one Christian church was spared and that was converted into a mosque as St Sophia had been in Istanbul. Other mosques were built. The whole aspect of the little city changed. The fine palaces and marble edifices with which the Emperor Septimius Severus and others had endowed it disappeared. Gradually the streets and the houses took on a thoroughly Oriental aspect. The private dwellings became private indeed with the introduction of the harem system of secluding the women, which entailed the erection of high blank walls and hidden courtyards to screen them from male gaze.

The language spoken in the town changed. Arabic supplanted the Punic tongue used by the descendants of the old Phœnician stock and the Latin of others. Tripoli was more than ever separated from the rest of Tripolitania by the desert belt created by the destruction of the cultivated lands and the forests. Agriculture perished with the disappearance of the Berber peasants.

But soon oases sprang up around the capital and the other towns for the feeding of the urban population. Corn and vegetables were grown and fruit-trees—oranges, mandarines, almonds—were brought from the East. In time the most useful of all, the date-palm, was introduced. It may have happened by accident, as the presence of the many palms outside the walls of Marrakesh, the southern capital of Morocco, reputed to be due to the unintentional dropping of date-stones by an army of besiegers from the southern regions beyond the Grand Atlas Mountains.

Later on, flowers and ornamental bushes and trees, to make

gardens, followed, as the wives of the new masters of the city demanded more amenities of life when Tripoli and the coastal zone became more settled. This region never had much connection with the rest of Tripolitania and has not to this day. So the capital derived no military strength from the country and was too weak to stand alone. It needed support from some outside source. There was the choice between Tunisia and Egypt. The latter was too far away and not a strong sea-power ; so it had to be the former. Therefore the political influence of Tunis became predominant.

Tripoli had only herself to consider. For her sister cities had vanished. Both Sabratha and Leptis had been destroyed by the Arabs as far back as the seventh century. So she accepted the protection of Tunis. She was greatly impoverished.

Her chief industry, the Saharan trade, had suffered greatly in the troublous times ; for the caravans were liable to be stopped and looted. So she had to fall back on her second, piracy, which had been practised by her citizens at least as far aback as the days of the Vandals. It was more profitable than fishing. At this epoch it had not reached the height of success that it was to attain in later years and might be described as a longshore profession. But everything must have a beginning ; and in centuries to come the pirates of Tripoli were to rank with those of Algiers and Salé.

But the city was to suffer herself from marauders, more daring and more terrible than her own. In A.D. 1146 she was raided and plundered by a lightning descent of freebooters from overseas. These were the Northmen, or Normans, who after long voyages from the north of Europe had set up little kingdoms in the island of Sicily. Others of them had sailed on to Constantinople to enlist in the Imperial Guards at the Byzantine Court, while still others had penetrated into the south of Russia.

But those from Sicily who had made the descent on Tripoli had no opportunity of staying there and becoming petty kings, as their brothers had done in so many other countries. For fourteen years they stripped the city and her citizens bare and then were forced to sail away in their Viking boats to their island home. The Arabs had revolted and driven them out.

The Tripolitaniens were naturally disappointed at the failure of Tunis to help them against the Normans. But they put up with their ally until, in 1321, the chief of an Arab tribe, called the Beni-Ammar, set himself up as their ruler, and he and his descendants held the position until 1401, except for a short interregnum of a dozen years.

Then the Tunisians regained control over Tripoli.

In the fifteenth century piracy increased greatly in Tripoli, the ships grew in number and size, their crews more daring and ruthless. Their attacks on the commerce of Europe became more

audacious, more destructive. It was the same with Algiers and Tunis. All equally provoked the anger of the Christian nations. But Tripoli was the first to suffer for her sins ; for the King of Spain, Ferdinand the Catholic, swooped on and seized the city and prepared to hold it for ever. He commanded that the great walls surrounding it and the Castello should be rebuilt and made stronger. The latter's first erection is usually attributed to him ; but it is highly probable that its beginning dated farther back and that he only restored and strengthened it. This happened in A.D. 1510 ; but the Spaniards in 1528 gave the town to the Knights of Malta, who had been driven from their island. They held it for only twenty years. Then the Sultan of Constantinople sent the fleet of Sinan Pasha to capture Tripoli, which for the first time in its troubled history became Turkish territory, and was governed by regents appointed by the Sublime Porte. The first was a notorious pirate named Dragut.

As the piracy continued and grew worse, various European nations sent squadrons of warships to smoke out this wasps' nest. But all the attempts to destroy the pirates failed ; and the war that the newly born United States of America waged upon Tripoli off and on from 1803 to 1815 was no more successful. In 1711 one viceroy of the Sultan, Ahmed Pasha Caramanli by name, set himself up as an independent ruler, although still making valuable gifts to his late master to propitiate him. He was the builder of the mosque that bears his name. He succeeded in establishing a dynasty which lasted until 1835, when Turkey got possession of Tripoli again and held it until the Italians took it from her in 1911-12.

Rome had no right whatever to the city. But she needed something to console her for the baulking of her designs on Tunisia, to which she considered that she had a just claim because of the large number of her nationals who had settled in it. She began to fear that Germany too had designs on Tripolitania and determined to anticipate her.

Her methods were the same as she adopted in more recent years in her attacks on Corfu, on Albania, on Greece and on France, for all of which she could not offer the excuse of border incidents that she did in the case of Abyssinia. After some diplomatic wrangling in the summer months of 1911 she suddenly hurled at the Sultan of Turkey's head an ultimatum imperiously demanding his consent to a military occupation of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania. It is all very familiar now. He was given only twenty-four hours to reply ; and, failing his agreement, Rome declared war on 29th September 1911.

Her troops were not ready to move at once ; but four days after the declaration of the existence of a state of hostilities an Italian naval squadron appeared off Tripoli, and its commander



Photo by the Author

OLD TRIPOLI
THE FESTIVAL OF THE NEGROES. "TOO PROUD TO WALK."

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Photo by the Author

TRIPOLI
THE PARKING-PLACE OF THE CARAVANS

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gave notice that the town would be bombarded if it were not surrendered at once. As the Turkish governor refused the demand the warships fired for two hours on the picturesque old walls and the Castello, all equally useless for defence. Then a force of 1500 sailors landed under the command of Captain Cagni, a very dashing officer who had been equerry to H.R.H. Prince Luigi di Savoia, Duke of the Abruzzi, who himself was at that time commanding a flotilla of destroyers. Both of them had a few years previously been well known to and liked by the British officers of the garrison of Bombay, when the Italian cruiser *Cristoforo Colombo*, in which they were serving as lieutenants, paid a long visit to that city. The prince, then aged twenty-one, was very popular with us because of his great love of sport and adventure. Three years later he began a distinguished career as a mountaineer and explorer by being the first to climb Mount Elias in Alaska. Unable to endure the idle life of a court he next organised an expedition to the North Pole which made the then nearest approach to that elusive goal. Then he made the first ascent of Mount Auwenzori in East Africa and later climbed K2 in the Himalayas. But he did not neglect his profession of a naval officer; and, while his former equerry was leading the invasion of Tripolitania, he was attacking and sinking Turkish torpedo-boats with his flotilla off Prevesa in Epirus.

A week after Captain Cagni's daring exploit of landing on enemy soil in the face of heavy opposition and taking up a position at Bumeliana on 5th October, the vanguard of the Italian army arrived. It was a force of some field and mountain batteries and nine thousand infantry and established itself in a position in the outskirts of the oasis of Tripoli. But on 4th October, the day after the bombardment, Nashu Pasha, the Turkish Commander, had, on orders from Constantinople, moved out with the garrison into the desert outside the town. On the 15th he surprised the Italians by a sudden assault on their position at Sciara Siuta in the Tripoli oasis and was aided by a rising in their rear. Two companies of Bersaglieri, the crack Rifle Corps, were cut to pieces and the rest of their troops suffered heavily. Further attacks followed; and finally the invaders were forced to fall back to another position and clear away the enemies in their rear. A monument to the dead Bersaglieri has since been erected on the spot.

Heavy reinforcements were now sent to the Italian general, who by the beginning of December had sixteen batteries of field artillery and fifteen thousand infantry. Thus strengthened, he twice attacked the Turks and drove them out of the Tripoli oasis. They retired to Azizia, a spot that could then hardly be called even a village, thirty miles to the south. Here the Turkish commander set up his headquarters and was not dislodged from

it. In fact the Turks remained there until after the coming of peace.

Shortly after the landings in October, Cyrenaica was attacked by the navy. Derna and Benghazi, as well as Homs in Tripolitania, were captured from the sea after a slight resistance. Now the Rome Government, probably alarmed by the doubtful results of the fighting near Tripoli, forbade the commander of its land forces there, General Caneva, to take further action.

But in Cyrenaica the fighting continued. Derna was closely besieged and Benghazi fiercely attacked by an Arab force, which was repelled with heavy losses. The notorious politician-soldier, Enver Bey, now appeared in the province to whip up resistance to the invaders and urge the co-operation of the local inhabitants with the Turks. He was successful in his mission ; and the tribesmen of the region rallied to his banner.

Meanwhile in Tripolitania the Italian troops were fuming at the inglorious inaction to which the timid politicians at home had condemned them. It is interesting to remember that Mussolini, then a red-hot Socialist, was one of the loudest and bitterest opponents of the war. But in the following year the ban on battles was raised in Tripolitania ; and the Italian army there fought several successful engagements, which finally forced the Turkish Government to sign the Treaty of Ouchy, which handed Tripolitania and Cyrenaica to their victorious enemies. Italy had achieved her aim. She had established herself strongly on the southern Mediterranean coast.

But she was to find that she was only at the beginning of her troubles. For in spite of the treaty signed by the representatives of the Sultan the interior of the country was not at peace by any means. The natives who had fought for the Turks and the great religious confraternity of the Senussi, whose headquarters were in the Fezzan, were still hostile ; and, when Italy declared war on Austria in May 1915, they rose in open revolt, urged on by German and Turkish agents. Matters got so bad that at last the Government in Rome resolved to abandon all Libya except the two ports of Tripoli and Homs. This policy of scuttle was duly carried out, and this was the situation when the World War ended in 1918. And so matters remained until after the arrival of Governor Volpi in 1921. He persuaded the Government in Rome to allow him to attempt the recovery of the colony by degrees. In 1922 a beginning was made by the recapture of Misurata, the little town and harbour to the east of Homs. Then troops were pushed out carefully to the south. Azizia was retaken from the rebels who had replaced the Turkish General Headquarters there. And by 1925 Italian domination was restored as far as Gharian, sixty-five miles to the south on the Jebel, the mountain range which rises suddenly out of the coastal plain.

The headquarters of the General Officer Commanding the Southern Region and of an infantry brigade were established there. But the reconquest of Tripolitania was not complete. No civilian was allowed outside the walls of Tripoli without a signed permit from the Chief of Police. And communication with Gharian was only possible when, after due notice being given, the road from Tripoli was guarded by infantry sentries stationed along it on both sides at every few hundred yards, while mounted parties of Italian and native Carabinieri patrolled it continually during the few daylight hours when it was open.

Next, the whole of the coast-line to the junction of the two provinces at the Gulf of Sirte, east of Misurata, was occupied. And in 1928 air and motorised forces swept south into the Fezzan and reconquered it, crushing the Senussi with a savage cruelty.

Then surely Libya could rest in peace? But unfortunately Mussolini and his Fascist Government decreed otherwise and in 1940 the flames of war blazed up more fiercely than ever from the east to west, from north to south, until they were trampled out under the feet of the British Eighth Army.

Turn the latest page of the Story of Tripoli.

In its long life the Castello has looked on many strange happenings. It has seen a victorious Spanish monarch sail into the harbour in triumph, a bloodthirsty pirate drive out the gallant Knights of Malta, brave little warships of the young United States of America bombarding its ramparts. The King of Italy's sailors and soldiers fighting their way ashore against the Turkish garrison.

But now in January 1943 it has witnessed them and their German allies, dusty and woebegone, fleeing in panic before the victors of a great desert battle.

And in the following month it has seen the sequel, the streets of the city that it had failed to guard filled with khaki ranks of men of Britain and their allies, the lines of Scots soldiers stretching along the beautiful promenade of the Lungomare Conte Volpi, battalions of warriors from the Antipodes marching through the straight avenues that converge on its old Piazza.

And instead of the rapine and massacre that hitherto always followed each conquest of Tripoli, the ancient Fortress has seen its strangest sight in Italian police calmly aiding their conquerors to keep order as its ancient walls echoed the ringing tones of a British Prime Minister giving the thanks of his king and nation to the gallant army and its chief for their great victory in the desert war, while the Union Jack was hoisted over city and Citadel.

What will the next chapter of its history be?

TRIPOLI MAKES WAR ON THE U.S.A.

A CITIZEN of the United States of America looking to-day on the small and attractive white city of Tripoli in its green setting would find it hard to realise that so puny an adversary would ever have dared to defy and challenge to war the might of the great Republic. But it did, and more than once.

And it was not so very long ago, little more than a hundred years, for it was in the beginning of the nineteenth century. True, the Americans were not then the mighty nation that they have now become. Nevertheless the population of the States was more than three million ; their navy, although only started in 1798, was composed of well-built ships manned by skilful sailors and well-trained gunners. Their soldiers had only recently defeated the armies of their Mother Country in a long and bloody war. Their territories were immense, if undeveloped.

And Tripoli ? She had no army at all. There were undisciplined bands of ill-armed ruffianly brigands, not soldiers, who fought only for plunder. She had no navy. Her ships were a scratch lot of pirate vessels manned by the off-scourings of Turkish gails and of the waterside slums of many ports, renegades and murderers of every land.

Yet Tripoli had held the world in awe for centuries. No merchantman of any nation dared sail the European seas without her leave. Every maritime country paid blackmail to the piratical Pasha who ruled her. Like Tunis and Algiers, the little white town made its insolent demands on all Christian governments, who meekly acceded to them. Those which did not pay a regular yearly tribute, gave large sums of money under the name of " presents," or sent munitions and stores like powder, lead, cannon-balls, spear-heads, masts, ropes, canvas for sails.

Incredible as it may seem, even the young United States of America, three thousand miles away across the Atlantic Ocean, born in battle, proud and warlike, paid more than eighty thousand dollars annually so that their ships might sail safely on their lawful occasions.

The penalty of non-compliance with the pirates' demands was sinking ships, drowning seamen, men, women and children dragged in chains to a cruel servitude and living death in the dungeons of Tripoli. Young Christian girls of France, Ireland, Spain, England, Holland publicly exposed naked in the slave market for sale, stared at by leering negroes, white men and

brown, pawed and prodded by the lewd hands of intending buyers, openly bargained for and bought to be carried away to the harems of the purchasers or the brothels of the port—to a fate worse than death.

Christian priests, once-prosperous London merchants, proud nobles of Spain, cultured Frenchmen, staggered under heavy burdens in the broiling heat through the streets of Tripoli or toiled at the building of new fortifications under the whips of cruel taskmasters. Some, under-nourished, diseased, dropped dead at their work and their corpses were flung in the nearest midden to be devoured by starving dogs.

Here a frenzied mob of fanatical Moslems, anxious to win Paradise by killing an unbeliever, drags out into the market-place some miserable aged Christian slave whose callous master had sold him to them for a few paltry coins, because the poor wretch was too old or decrepit to work. To the jeers and laughter of Moslem women and children the bigoted ruffians torture and do to death the shrieking man. Then the hell-hounds go on their way rejoicing, leaving the shattered body to draw its last breath, alone, abandoned by all.

No; not by all. For when the murderers have passed out of sight a feeble, grey-haired white man in a tattered *barricano* steals up to the dying Christian and, kneeling beside him, gives him the last rites of his Church and whispers the soothing words of spiritual consolation. He is a Redemptorist priest, one of a noble religious order who have devoted themselves to their Godlike task of ministering to the slaves, often selling themselves into servitude to restore some captive to freedom with the money from their own sale.

This cruel murder is too ordinary an occurrence to draw a glance from the group of drunken sailors reeling down to the harbour from one of the many boozing-kens around the market-place, filthy hovels where the vilest liquor is freely sold in spite of Mahommed's prohibition—for many of the pirates are not Moslems and their right to debauchery is not to be questioned. Too many of them, alas, have been Christians, renegades from European nations. They must be free to do what they like, for the city lives by them. They are the men who bring the booty from the plundered ships, the foreign slaves for the bagnios, the women for the most infamous trade of all. The Pasha himself shares in the profits of their crimes; he has the first choice of the male and female prisoners they bring in to be sold; and a fifth of the receipts from the sale of the cargoes and of the captured ships brought safely into port goes into his Treasury.

This infamous slave traffic flourished in all the Barbary States. In Tunis, Algiers, Salé in Morocco, such terrible scenes were to be witnessed every day. This corner of Africa was a veritable hell on

earth ; and Tripoli, lesser in size than the other capitals, was their equal in crime.

For centuries the infamy continued, and no Christian nation seemed to have the power to stop it. Occasionally one or the other tried. Oliver Cromwell in England sent the celebrated Admiral Blake against Tripoli. Charles V, the great emperor, attempted to overwhelm Algiers with a large fleet and an immense army ; but the devil fought for his own ; the Spaniard's ships were sunk by a storm which also damped the powder and chilled the hearts of his soldiers, so that they were scattered by a mere handful of Moslem mercenaries.

But most monarchs and governments were content to pay cowardly tribute to the petty rulers of the pirate strongholds, who were under the protection of the Sultans of Turkey. King Louis of France and Charles II of England poured out large sums to redeem subjects of theirs captured and enslaved. Napoleon, the dictator of Europe, contemplated destroying these wasps' nests, but never carried out his intentions. Only Austrian and Russian ships went free, because their countries were near and powerful neighbours of Turkey and could bring stern pressure to bear on the Sublime Porte if their trade or territory was menaced.

But all other nations suffered. In spite of the blackmail that they paid, the pirates not only seized or sank their ships, but even raided their shores, swooped on their coastal villages and carried off the inhabitants to slavery. Not even lands as far away as Ireland and Iceland were safe from these incursions.

To put an end to this terrible curse of piracy and slavery seemed a hopeless task ; there was little use in pressing the rulers of the pirate cities to stop it. Even if the Pasha of Tripoli, the Bey of Tunis, or the Dey of Algiers were willing to do so, their subjects would not have obeyed them. For the ships that went out to prey on commerce were not the property of the State. They all belonged to private individuals or small joint-stock companies, and all ranks and classes had an interest in them. High officials, enterprising merchants, ex-pirates who had grown rich on the profits of the profession and retired from active participations, all owned ships. When the crew of a vessel returned from a lucrative cruise and sailed a rich prize into harbour they might pool their earnings, buy up the captured craft, fit it out and go to sea in it as part-owners instead of mere paid hands. So high and low, rich and poor, had a pecuniary interest in the trade, and any attempt by Pasha or Bey to stop it would have caused a rebellion. The profits of the business were colossal, as may be judged from the fact that in eight years of the seventeenth century—from 1613 to 1621—there were brought into the port of Algiers alone, 193 French ships, 60 English, 120 Spanish, 56 German and 447 Dutch as prizes, not to mention those belonging to other nations or those

sunk, burned at sea or sold in foreign countries by their captors to avoid paying the Chief of the State his just due of a fifth of the value. In later years the volume of merchant shipping afloat was vastly increased. And Tripoli, although smaller than Algiers and with fewer engaged in the trade, did very well indeed.

Even though nearly all European countries suffered from this plague they unfortunately would not unite against the pirates. The usual jealousies kept them apart ; they could not trust one another, each fearing that if any nation vanquished the common enemies the victor would seize their territories. All agreed on the necessity of putting an end to the pirates, but none would undertake the task of "belling the cat." And the murderous lords of Tripoli, Algiers and Tunis laughed at their futile rage and empty threats. Their contempt for the helpless Christian peoples deepened with every day that passed ; and it encouraged them to make fresh demands.

So one day the Pasha of Tripoli, not satisfied with the large annual payment made him by the United States of America, had the insolence to declare that this must be largely increased. He did not ask it as a favour, but insisted on it as his right. This was too much for even the most pacific politician in Washington, but he and his kind had sufficient influence to prevent a definite refusal being made to the impertinent demand. It was decided to open negotiations with the Pasha and request him to abate his terms. A new consul had just been appointed to Tunisia, and he was instructed to get into touch on his arrival with the consuls of Tripoli and Algiers and confer with them as to the best course to pursue.

This man's name was William Eaton ; he had started life as a schoolteacher, then entered the army as a captain and fought the Red Indians in Georgia and in Ohio. At the age of thirty-three he was beginning a new career, for which he had had no previous training, but which appealed to him greatly as he was fond of travel and adventure. For some time he had been greatly interested in the Barbary States, on which public attention in the United States was beginning to be focused by reason of reports of fresh attacks on American ships by the pirates. He was anxious to learn at first hand what truth there was in the stories of the atrocities committed by those fiends in human shape—as they were depicted in the tales that filtered through to America. So it was with a lively anticipation that he embarked on the warship in which he was given passage to North Africa. As the vessel drew near the Mediterranean he spent most of the days on deck with a spyglass, scanning the horizon for any sail that might mean a Barbary rover coming to attack them.

But the pirates were men of business, and there would be nothing to be gained by an encounter with a warship. So the

frigate flying the Stars and Stripes sailed peacefully along the African shores into the harbour of Tunis, the beauty of which in its circle of lofty mountains fascinated him. The new consul's scholastic training made him scan eagerly the coast near the city for traces of the ruins of Carthage. In vain he appealed to his shipmates for information as to their position ; but the naval officers were not classical scholars and most had never heard of the old Punic capital.

When Eaton landed he found no one to welcome him or guide him to the town ; but he could see the walls of Tunis and made his way towards them through a hostile crowd, who jeered and spat at the solitary Christian. But he found his way to the gate of the city and was fortunate in meeting a servant of a European consul, who led the way to the American Consulate. It was February 1799.

Next day he went to pay his official visit to the Bey's Palace after he had notified His Highness of his intention and requested permission. He took a Moslem of his staff to act as guide and interpreter. He had received no reply from the Pasha, but concluded that all would be well. When he reached the white steps with the marble lions at the Palace entrance there was no official to receive him. The sentries not only neglected to salute him but refused to allow him to enter. Nor would they send word to the Bey of the foreigner's presence for quite a long time. Even when they did, no one came to the entrance to welcome Eaton ; and after a time his temper could no longer endure the deliberate insult ; he turned away and strode off angrily.

This was evidently the best line of action that he could have adopted ; for early next morning two officials of the Bey waited on him to offer their master's excuses and tell him that His Highness would be pleased to receive the new consul that afternoon. Although the apology offered was a poor one, Eaton made the best of it and entered the gaudy but ramshackle carriage that had been sent for him. As its team of fine Arab horses in their silver-plated harness scattered the crowds in the narrow street there were hostile looks and muttered curses at the heretic foreigner who sat at his ease in their sovereign's vehicle while they, true Believers, trudged along in his dust. But there was no open demonstration against him ; and the new consul reached the Palace without incident. At the entrance the sentries saluted him carelessly. In the inner open courtyard with the slender black and white marble pillars two lines of servants were drawn up, between which he passed to where a richly dressed official waited to receive him. This man greeted him in English spoken in a strong foreign accent. He was a Spanish renegade from Barcelona, who was to act as interpreter in the interview with the Bey. Insisting on Eaton's guide remaining outside he led

the way into the smaller council room with the imposing silver throne. It was empty but for two attendants. Here the consul was left to cool his heels for nearly half an hour before a door opened and a small procession of armed guards entered, followed by an individual who was apparently a sort of herald. This man stationed himself at the door and called out loudly in Arabic all the titles and dignities of His Highness the Pasha.

After a long pause a fat old man came in, and with the assistance of two attendants climbed up on the throne, seating himself on it with crossed legs and letting his *babouches* fall off, showing his bare feet, while two servants with large peacock-feather fans stood behind him. He ignored his visitor and glanced towards the interpreter, who prostrated himself on the carpet after whispering to the consul to do the same. But Captain Eaton indignantly refused to do so and contented himself with a slight bow. Then on his knees the court official addressed the Bey in Arabic, and, when His Highness had answered him curtly, interpreted his words as a flowery welcome to Tunis. Eaton then asked him to express his pleasure at being in the country and at making the acquaintance of its sovereign, whose renown had spread over the ocean to the consul's own far-distant land.

The Bey was evidently not interested in what he said and stared vacantly over Eaton's head. The interview degenerated into a laboured conversation between the visitor and the interpreter. After a few long and awkward pauses His Highness signed to the attendants to approach and help him down from the throne and put on his slippers, then without a glance at Eaton he shambled out of the apartment.

This scurvy treatment fired the blood of the old Indian fighter ; and, turning on his heel, Eaton walked out of the room, strode indignantly across the court and down the marble stairs. If the carriage had not been in waiting he would have continued out into the streets of the town on foot.

This first meeting with the ruler of Tunisia was the beginning of Eaton's dislike of the petty potentate to whom he was accredited—in these Barbary States the consuls were ambassadors rather than mere lesser officials dealing only with trade matters and the smaller concerns of their nationals. They were the only diplomatic representatives that their countries had there. The Bey's rude behaviour was felt by Captain Eaton to be an affront to the young Republic for which he had the honour to act ; and it coloured all the subsequent relations between the two. Their mutual dislike deepened as time went on ; for the Tunisian ruler was angered by the American soldier's independent manner. Eventually their quarrels had a serious effect on the latter's subsequent career.

A month after his arrival in North Africa a warship flying the Stars and Stripes put into the harbour of Tunis, carrying the U.S.A. consul at Algiers, come to convey him to Tripoli to confer with their colleague there on the question of the negotiations with the Pasha that they had been directed by their Government to carry out. They found that petty sovereign even more difficult to deal with than the Bey of Tunis. On the matter of abating his demands on Washington he was adamant and insisted on his right to impose any conditions he wished on the grant of safe-conduct to American ships. In vain they attempted to argue with him, and eventually were obliged to adjourn the negotiations until they could consult their Government. Eventually the consuls of Tunis and Algiers had to return to their posts, leaving the affair in this unsatisfactory state. But during his stay in Tripoli Eaton was, through his colleague there, brought in contact with a personage with whom he was subsequently to have important dealings. This was the Pasha's elder brother, Ahmed, who had been displaced by his junior. Through the medium of the local consul Eaton had long conversations with him and, realising that he was suffering under a grievance, put into Ahmed's mind the idea that the United States Government might be inclined to help him to depose his usurping brother and re-establish himself as Pasha. Shortly after he returned to his post he learned that Ahmed had been exiled.

When he got back to Tunis the former schoolmaster set himself the task of learning to speak Arabic, a knowledge of which would, he realised, be of great use to him. In the next two years the relations between Washington and Tripoli grew steadily worse; and, as the attacks on American ships continued, the President eventually sent a squadron of warships to blockade Tripoli.

A threat to bombard the city left the Pasha unmoved. Confident in the strength of its defences and convinced that the American menaces were only empty words he ignored them.

Then one day from the windows of his harem in the Castello he saw the trim and taut shape of a frigate flying the Stars and Stripes standing under all sail into the bay. Before its captain could communicate with the shore the enraged Pasha ordered fire to be opened on the audacious vessel, which instantly cleared for action and replied, its crew cheering wildly as they manned their guns. Officers and men rejoiced at the end of the long inaction.

The frigate was the U.S.S. *Philadelphia*, commanded by William Bainbridge, a daring sailor who had first gone to sea at the early age of fourteen in a merchant ship. When the young Republic organised its navy in 1798 he was nominated to the Corps of Naval Officers and appointed to the *Resolution*. Now he

had the dearest wish of his heart—he was commanding his own ship in battle. The odds against him were heavy ; against shore batteries and stone walls a frigate's guns were light and their range limited. But neither Bainbridge nor his crew were daunted. With the courage of American sailors they held on their course and sailed into an inferno of shot and shell. Their vessel was hit again and again. Men fell at their posts and stained the white decks with their life-blood. A fleet of well-armed pirate ships and galleys buzzed round them like wasps.

The frigate's guns proved powerless against the stone walls of the fortifications at a long range, so the undaunted captain gave orders to close in as near the batteries as they could get. Under all the canvas that they could set the *Philadelphia* sailed deeper into the bay until the sailors could see the dark faces of the men serving the guns ashore. The breeze was fairly strong and the ship, well handled, drew nearer and nearer to the land. She was sailing fast when suddenly she stopped dead, shuddered from truck to keelson, the topmasts went to the board, and from the shore batteries and the pirates' decks an exulting yell went up. The gallant frigate had gone aground hard and fast.

The sailors did all they could to get her afloat again. In spite of the shower of shells falling on them, they lowered two boats and rowed seaward to drop a kedge anchor, and their shipmates on board tried to haul her off with it. It was hopeless ; they could not move her. The Americans were falling fast, but there was no thought of surrender. The pirate craft swarmed round her. Her gunners were shot down at their pieces. The two boats were sunk and their crews riddled with bullets as they struggled in the water.

The end came soon. From stem to stern, to port and starboard, a mass of exultant pirates swarmed over her shattered bulwarks. The brave Bainbridge and his gallant crew were overwhelmed by numbers of bloodthirsty savages and made prisoners. Only their monetary value saved them from massacre. The shot-torn Stars and Stripes was hauled down. The incredible had happened—for the first time an American warship was a prize in the hands of the corsairs of Tripoli !

The news had a disastrous effect along the whole Barbary Coast, and spread like wildfire from port to port in North Africa, where every pirate from Tunis to Salé (where the infamous " Sally Rovers " came from) on the flat north shore of the Bou Regreg in Morocco rejoiced at the thought that a warship of the proud American nation lay with her flag hauled down under the guns of the old Castello in Tripoli Bay. Let it be a warning to all Christian peoples who refused to submit to the demands of any of the Barbary rulers of the sea !

The exultant Pasha of Tripoli, as he looked out at the splendid

vessel, resolved to float her at once and send her to sea as his own pirate flagship. He gloated at the thought of the rich prizes that she would bring in. He gave orders for ten galleys to be made fast to the stranded frigate to tow her off. This was done, but it was useless. In vain the wretched slaves strained at the giant oars to which they were chained, the blood spouting from their bare backs under the whips of their taskmasters. All other attempts to move the ship were equally in vain; she was too firmly fixed. So the disappointed Pasha had to content himself, when the last attempt, after lightening her, also failed, with plundering the poor *Philadelphia* from truck to keelson and then preserving her as a monument of his victory and the prowess of his subjects. She proved a popular spectacle; from dawn to night the people of Tripoli flocked to the beach to stare at her. As long as her timbers held together she was to remain there as a token of their triumph over the hated infidels.

But across the ocean a wave of anger swept the United States; and in the navy the feeling was one of furious rage, almost of shame. But American sailors do not submit readily to defeat and insult. A young officer—Stephen Decatur was his name—volunteered to remove the reproach. He offered to enter Tripoli harbour and, as it was not possible to tow the *Philadelphia* away, to burn her under the beards of the Pasha and his people.

He was given permission to attempt the apparently hopeless task. And so later on, as day was breaking over Tripoli, an American warship again approached the harbour. The pirates were apparently late sleepers, and no alarm was raised. Her helm was put over and her head brought into the wind, thus stopping her way, and two boats, fully manned, were lowered quickly into the water. Stephen Decatur was in the leading one. As the sailors bent to their oars Tripoli awoke. A rush was made to the guns of the batteries and the pirates ran to their boats. But only a few shots were fired at the daring intruders when a fierce burst of flame rose from the *Philadelphia*, and by the time the Americans had dropped into their boats and pulled away she was blazing from stem to stern. The surprise had been complete. The suddenness and audacity of the attack had succeeded beyond expectation. Only one man had been wounded.

The frigate opened fire with all the guns she could bring to bear to cover the boats, which came alongside and, when their crews clambered on board, were quickly hoisted to their davits as the ship's head paid off, her sheets were trimmed and she sailed defiantly out of the bay. On her bridge again stood Lieutenant Decatur, and his brother officers crowded round to congratulate him, while the excited crew lined the rail and cheered again and again as they looked back at the tall column of smoke and flame

that rose to the sky over Tripoli. The *Philadelphia's* honour was saved.

I wonder if any of the American airmen who flew over Tripoli to smite the city with their devastating bombs remembered this exploit and gave a thought to their brave compatriots who avenged the lost ship, as they passed over her watery grave.

When the news of the deed reached the United States a chorus of pride and rejoicing rang loud in praise of the daring young sailor who had conceived and carried it out. Congress decreed him a sword of honour, and he was promoted to the rank of captain. He continued to serve in the intermittent war against Tripoli, which went on with fluctuating success until, on 4th June 1805, peace was signed with the real ruler of the city, Yussuf Pasha. He was forced to agree to renounce the annual payment from the United States, but he was consoled by receiving a lump sum of sixty thousand dollars as the ransom of Bainbridge and the survivors of his crew, who were set at liberty.

And some years later both Bainbridge and Decatur found themselves again in the Mediterranean in command against their old enemy in a fresh war. Not until France stormed and occupied Algiers in 1830 was piracy finally ended on the Barbary Coast.

Decatur did not live to see that. Ten years earlier he fell in a duel at Bladensburg with his former commander, Commodore Barron.

But his name has not been forgotten by his fellow-countrymen. He will always be remembered as the author of the famous phrase "Our country, right or wrong." And a hundred years after his bold exploit I trod the decks of two fine American destroyers named the *Bainbridge* and the *Decatur* in South China. Thus were preserved in the United States Navy the memory of two heroes. I shall always cherish a pleasant recollection of their namesakes, these two smart little warships and their commanders, Lieutenants Woodward and Steele.

But while laurels were being worthily won in the war with Tripoli by America's sailors, they did not monopolise the glory. The former soldier and present consul, Captain Eaton, was destined to gain his share of renown and become also a popular hero. In the position he held in Tunis he was not a success. For his many disputes with the autocratic Bey ended in a violent quarrel in which His Highness ordered him to leave his dominions at once. Eaton did so willingly. This was in the year 1803. He returned to the United States, where apparently he had suffered no less of reputation by his abrupt dismissal. For in the following year he was sent back to the Mediterranean as U.S. Naval Agent with Commodore Barron's squadron.

In Egypt he came in contact with Ahmed Pasha again; and in Alexandria they resumed their discussions on the subject of

the exiled pasha's grievance against his usurping younger brother. Eaton's agile brain had conceived a plan as mad as ever author of sensational stories had imagined. It was that he and Ahmed Pasha should find the money to raise and equip a small force of about five hundred men, adventurers of various races and nationalities which Captain Eaton, being an old soldier, would command and lead across the Libyan Desert to the invasion of Tripolitania and the dethronement of the usurping ruler. He would endeavour to secure the approval and assistance of the United States Government, which he had no authority to pledge, for Washington was absolutely ignorant of the scheme.

To raise the funds he and the Pasha approached various individuals in Alexandria—bankers, rich merchants, Greek speculators, Tripolitanian exiles who were enemies of the ruler of their city and ready to aid his rival, in short anyone who would be willing to subscribe a piastre to the funds of the expedition. Eventually a respectable sum was secured, which Ahmed undertook to repay when the scheme proved successful and he was restored to his dignities.

The amount raised was none too much for equipping the force. Besides there would have to be advances of pay to needy volunteers and a large amount would be required for the hire of camels, the purchase of arms and ammunition and—heaviest demand of all—the bribes for Egyptian officials of high rank and low to prevent the disclosure of their plans and the vetoing of their actions by the authorities.

From the beginning Eaton had stipulated, and Ahmed had agreed, that he was to be Commander-in-Chief and in undisputed control of everything. The bulk of the work fell on the American; and his task was not light. He had to decide on the plan of campaign, select and reconnoitre the route to be followed, recruit and train the troop of Arab horsemen and the five hundred camel-riders that he had got together. His army was a real Tower of Babel. Besides the Arabs—and they were a sorry collection of ruffians from different places and tribes—he had enlisted two score Levantine Greeks, a few Americans and a sprinkling of adventurers of various countries and origins. But Eaton was to prove himself a born leader of men and gradually got his human menagerie to shape something like soldiers.

But before long he found that his worst trouble was to come from Ahmed. The man who aspired to rule the Tripolitani-ans could not rule himself or control his temper. He resented Eaton's leadership, objected to what he declared was the American's attempts to dictate to him, interfered with the discipline of the force, was too free with the scum who formed the majority of the rank and file, but always stood on his dignity with the Commander-in-Chief.

The question of transporting the baggage and supplies, reduced to the minimum though they were, was very difficult and necessitated the purchase of many camels. This meant more forage to be carried and more drivers to be hired.

The route to be followed was not only toilsome but also dangerous. Water would be a problem everywhere along it. The world knows all about it to-day ; for it was that over which the British Eighth Army marched and countermarched in their Libyan campaign as far as Derna. From the rendezvous in the desert two-score miles away from Alexandria, which secrecy imperatively demanded, the badly disciplined, ill-equipped force was to move along the poorly defined coast track by way of all the places so well known to readers of the newspapers from 1940 to 1942—El Alamein, Sollum, Bardia, Tobruk.

But no difficulties daunted Eaton. He had secretly arranged with the captains of several American warships to be off Derna on a certain date, ready to co-operate with him when he attacked the town. So he allowed nothing to delay the start, and on 8th March 1805 gave the order to advance.

The pace that he set—and kept—was truly amazing. A journey of six hundred miles of desert lay before them. The natural difficulties were considerable ; the behaviour of his command made them harder to contend with. Several times the Arab cavalry and the riders and drivers of the camels mutinied ; and once the treacherous Ahmed put himself at the head of the malcontents and ordered them to attack the American leader.

But incredible as it may seem, in spite of their trials and difficulties, he actually reached Derna and, aided by the three U.S. warships, faithful to their rendezvous, captured the town on 17th April !

After the hardships of the desert it seemed to the exhausted little army a veritable paradise with its abundant supplies. But Eaton was determined that it should be no Capua for his weary troops and, well aware that he was likely to be attacked soon by a force from Tripoli, set his tired and mutinous men to the hard task of putting Derna at once in a state of defence. It was well that he did so ; for the Tripolitarians speedily arrived to assail the town.

All through May and well into June Eaton kept them at bay. His example inspired his weary men ; and they fought like heroes.

Then on 12th June came orders from the American naval commander, Commodore Rogers, to cease fire and evacuate Derna, because peace had been concluded with the Pasha of Tripoli. So its gallant little garrison hauled down the flag and marched out with the honours of war. Captain Eaton had worthily sustained the reputation of the Army of the United States of America. Then he returned to his native land.

THE COASTAL PLAIN

NATURE has divided Tripolitania into four separate and very distinct zones. They are :

The Coastal Plain.

The Jebel—the Country of the Cave-Dwellers.

The Hammada-el-Homra—the Stony Desert.

The Fezzan—the Desert of Sand.

The Coastal Plain

The shores of Tripolitania differ greatly from the Mediterranean coasts of the rest of North Africa west and east of it, until Egypt is reached. While those of Spanish Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia are mostly precipitous cliffs or hilly and rocky with ranges of mountains behind them, Tripolitania's six hundred and sixty miles sea-frontage consists of low, sandy beaches backed by a level plain extending from the barren dunes of the Gulf of Gabès in southern Tunisia to the border of Cyrenaica with its headlands, steep cliffs and rocky coves. Unlike the latter, the sandy coastline of Libya's western province is straight and unindented, and without natural harbours, unless the Gulf of Sidra, so dreaded by the mariners of old, can be classed as such. While landings from boats can be made anywhere along these beaches there are no places where a ship can find natural shelter, except under the headland of Tripoli, where it is not needed because of the splendid artificial harbour.

The country inland from the beaches is mostly sand and desertlike in appearance ; but sand, when there is water to irrigate it, is exceedingly fertile, as can be seen in the oases of the Sahara and, indeed, of this coastal plain, which are strung out most of the way from the Tunisian border to Sirte. Although, where uncultivated, the ground appears to be the wind-ribbed sand of the desert, it can be tilled and bear good crops, because there is, not only a winter rainfall of from five to fifteen inches, but water from the steep slopes of the mountain chain known as the Jebel. This averages a height of two thousand feet and behind Tripoli is about fifty miles from the sea. Down its north face the water runs to be soaked up by the thirsty earth below and drain towards the ocean. But it is everywhere available to be tapped by wells and raised to the surface to irrigate the land and help it to produce good crops.

So on this plain there is much barley grown, and in the many



Photo by the Author

TRIPOLI
THE MARKET-PLACE

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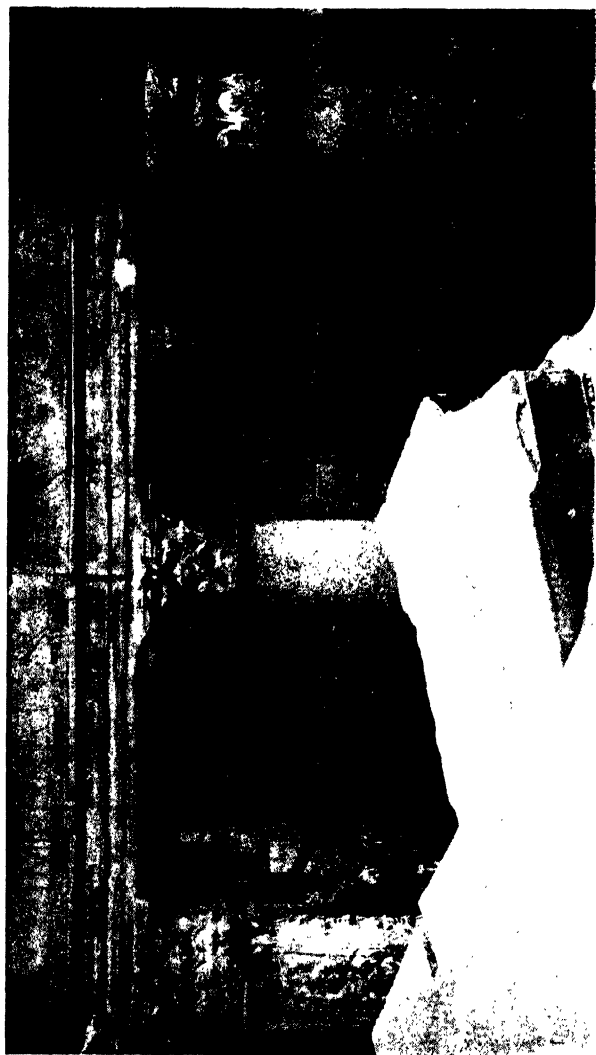


Photo by the Author

THE BIRTHPLACE OF AN EMPEROR

PERISTYLE OF THE BASILICA. LEPTIS MAGNA. INSCRIBED "IMPERATOR CÆSAR AUGUSTUS SEPTIMIUS . . ."

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oases along the coast are fruit-trees in abundance. There are figs, oranges, apricots, quinces, almonds and pomegranates, together with the useful and valuable olives. Groves of date-palms shade the oases ; and they bear fruit, although perhaps not equal to the dates of the Fezzan, because the Saharan zone is hotter than here by the sea and hundreds of miles farther south. These rival the best that Algeria or Tunisia produces.

But the climate of the coastal plain is more equable than that of the great desert. The mean temperature is 68° Fahrenheit ; although the nights in winter can be cold, the days never are really so. The oases testify to the temperatures of the climate ; for, beside the fruit-trees, oaks, cypresses, myrtles and laurels grow naturally.

In the oases stand many villages and the few small towns that dot the coast, such as Zuara, the terminus of the railway from Tripoli, and Sabratha. This latter is—or was, for the original town was destroyed in the Arab invasion—very old, for it was contemporaneous with the capital and so may date back to the sixteenth century B.C. To-day it is just a pretty little modern town, a place of bright-painted houses and fertile gardens standing in a vast plain. It is now called Sabratha Vulpea. Between it and the sea close by are the ruins of its vanished predecessor, the city founded by the Phoenicians, conquered in turn by the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Vandals and the Byzantine empire and blotted out by the fanatical Moslems.

The excavations carried out in recent years have laid bare the secrets of the ancient town and show that it was much larger than its successor. It is difficult to realise that the populations of the old-time cities of Tripolitania were much greater than those of its towns to-day. After Tripoli, the next largest is Misuratha, and that has only seventeen thousand inhabitants. But the great amphitheatre of old Sabratha now exposed to view was two-thirds of the area of the Colosseum in Rome, which held forty or fifty thousand spectators. Now the ancient builders of this African amphitheatre would not have constructed it to such capacity if there were not sufficient citizens in Sabratha to fill it. This would mean something over thirty thousand, and, fond of the Games as the people of the Roman Empire were, it may be presumed that every person in the town did not attend them at the same time.

Then, too, the traces of the city walls erected in the Byzantine era have been discovered—indeed, portions of them are still standing. And they show the area they enclosed and how much larger it was than that of Sabratha of to-day. There were extra-mural dwellers, too. In the days of peace the villas of the richer citizens were often built in beautiful gardens outside the city limits.

Beyond the walls are the remains of the baths of such a villa, which itself cannot be traced. But one can see the designs of the various rooms of these baths with portions of the floor mosaics in quite a good state of preservation. Inside the Byzantine ramparts is the Forum, which is near the sea. On the right was a temple, with a broad stairway leading up to the entrance to the building, the floor of which was raised above the level of the street. At one end of a great quadrangle is a marble-paved vestibule which leads between two marble pillars at the entrance to an inner temple. Inside the ruins of this was discovered a bronze head of much artistic value, which is supposed to represent the Emperor Philip the Arab. By the entrance steps of the inner temple stood a fountain, one of twelve presented to the city by a generous citizen, one Caius Flavius Pudens, as has been revealed by the inscription on a stone tablet found in the ruined Temple of Jupiter. This fine building stood on the west side of the Forum and is now used as a storehouse for the art treasures, statuary and valuable stones found in excavations. Among these is a fine bust of Jupiter himself. To protect them from the weather the windows of the chambers have been fitted with glass.

On the north side of the Forum are the ruins of the Justinian Basilica and of the fourth-century Law Courts. To the east, on a low rise overlooking the sea, is the well-preserved Theatre ; and nearly a mile further on is the great Amphitheatre. You look at it with astonishment ; it is so colossal ; and you wonder how it was possible to erect so great a building in days so long ago. What was the size of the city that could produce it and how could it have existed in a country to-day so depopulated ?

Stand on the upper tier of seats and try to visualise the scene that met a beholder's eyes on a day in the vanished past when the amphitheatre was filling with gaily-robed crowds hurrying to secure a good seat for the Games offered to the citizens of Sabratha by the Governor of the Province. The interior is soon like a garden bright with rows of gaily-coloured flowers, as stately men in purple-edged togas take their places beside lovely brunettes with shining, banded hair and graceful white robes. Along the street outside come a long line of brightly-painted palanquins borne by ebony-hued African slaves. But, passing them swiftly, go ornamental chariots drawn by long-tailed Barbary horses, these driven by their elegant young patrician owners, balancing skilfully as they stand on the swaying floors. Throngs of burly artisans and bare-armed workmen jostle each other at the entrance, round which is gathered a dense crowd of gaping Berber peasants watching the rich folk streaming in through the grand gate.

Perhaps it may be a really " gala " day. It may chance that the Emperor Septimius Severus has come from his imperial palace at Leptis Magna to show to his loyal subjects of Sabratha that he

loves all parts of his Libyan dominions equally. Then, suddenly, the shrill clangour of long brass trumpets rings out and a hoarse shout rises from the dense crowds lining the road as a stalwart body of soldiers, the escort of the new Prætorian Guard, with gleaming helmets, polished breastplates, greaves and shields, and armed with the dreaded Roman short, straight stabbing swords, tramp steadily at the head of a gay procession drawing near. And soon the excited onlookers see the ivory and gold chair of the Cæsar, the ruler of a world-wide empire, who is doubly popular to the people of Tripolitania because he is by birth a native of the land which he is now revisiting. Everyone knows that his heart is always with the country of his birth.

And now inside the vast amphitheatre the thousands of gaily-robed spectators rise from their seats to acclaim His Imperial and Divine Majesty as he is borne through the gateway and takes his place on the lavishly decorated throne-like seat.

Even citizens of Rome recently arrived in the Colony and hitherto scornful of the provincialism of Sabratha and its inhabitants are carried away by enthusiasm and almost fancy themselves back in the Circus Maximus, as the band of gladiators, some brought from the capital itself, others gigantic negroes from the southern deserts, march across the arena and halt to raise their weapons and shout the traditional greeting, "Hail, Cæsar! We who are about to die salute thee!"

Later, when the combats of men against men, of sword against sword, of sharp blade against trident and net are over and the dead carried away, even the Emperor himself leans forward with eager anticipation as he gives the sign to throw open the gate closing a tunnel running under the rows of benches. And excited cries ring out round the arena as six lions, caught only two days before in the jungles at the foot of the near-by mountains, rush in with lashing tails and angry roars. And half a dozen white-tusked elephants from the neighbouring forests shuffle in awkwardly after them. Then the surprised spectators, from whom the secret of the popular item of a wild animal battle has been well kept, shout and scream with excitement.

Yes, in the ruins of the old circus, with its great shattered stones sparkling in the sun and looking out over the blue sea, it is not difficult to make the past live once more. For such scenes were witnessed over and over again in the dead Sabratha.

Life in the modern town to-day is very different. It flows on tranquilly—or seems to do. But the inhabitants turn their faces often to the west and listen for the dreaded sound of distant gunfire or look up at the sky, fearing to see the terrible hostile aeroplanes that may rain down death and destruction on them.

Yet in oasis after oasis along the road to Tripoli nothing disturbs the silence except the songs of birds. And before the white

cottages of Italian colonists children play in the warm dust, while their mothers are helping the old men in the fields. Old men—only old men. For the young men are dying on distant battlefields for the cause of those against whom their fathers fought a quarter of a century before. And the girls are drafted across the sea to toil in factories and risk bombs for those who enslave them.

The white-haired colonists ask in bewilderment why they were brought here from the homeland to begin a new existence only to see their children dragged back to it—for what ?

When the Italians came to Tripolitania most of this coastal region, now so productive, was bare desert. Little could be done to cultivate it until the conquest of the colony was complete and the danger of raids by insurgents removed. That was not before 1928, or even later. Only then could the contemplated policy of bringing over peasant families from the mainland to develop the newly acquired possession be commenced. When it did begin it was carefully planned and promised well. Only agriculturists were imported, men used to cultivating the earth and not just unemployed mechanics and townsfolk. They brought their wives and families with them so that they might settle down contentedly and carry on the life to which they and their ancestors were accustomed. The climate was not worse, was even better, than that to which they were used. It was hardly hotter than Sicily and southern Italy and was certainly warmer in winter than most parts of their native land when the *tramontana* howls down from the hills.

The Government built villages for them with houses better and more sanitary than the old cottages that they had left and provided with churches and schools, priests and teachers, as well as shops and little cafés, so that they had all that was necessary to begin their new life. The farms were stocked, the houses furnished and loans advanced on easy terms ; and thus the future peasant-proprietors could make a flying start. There was every prospect of agricultural prosperity for the new colony. The Government in Rome planned to settle a hundred thousand families in it and so to that extent relieve the overcrowding of Italy, the ever-increasing population of which certainly needed more living room. Immense sums have been lavished already on Abyssinia, which is so much farther away from Europe, less accessible and not so likely to attract voluntary settlers.

Already the aspect of the region between the sea and the mountains in Tripolitania has changed greatly. Great stretches of barley have replaced the bare steppes. The road from Sabratha to the capital passes through the palm-shaded oases of Sorman, Zavia, El Maia and Zanzur ; but these have existed for centuries. On the other hand, nowadays, everywhere are to be seen the new white houses of the colonists, who are recent importations.

Two or three miles from the Gargaresh Gate of Tripoli is Gargaresh, and near it the main road to the mountain zone of the Jebel, Gharian and the Sahara turns off. It goes by way of Beni-Aden and Azizia. This Azizia is the place thirty miles from the capital where the Turkish general during the war with Turkey, and after him the chiefs of the insurgents, had their headquarters. Now here is the new Azizia with the buildings of the Agricultural Concession. They stand in the level plain which stretches in sheets of waving green in every direction. Where the ground is not cultivated it is covered with grass and an astonishing quantity and variety of wild flowers in spring. One day close to Azizia I picked twelve different species without moving a foot.

But the purpose of these Agricultural Concessions is to turn the land to better use and reclaim great areas that until recently were absolute desert. The silence of this peaceful zone is disturbed by the war-planes from the Castel Benito Airfield ten miles from Tripoli.

Although the railway to the south from Tripoli ends here, the road goes on to the mountain wall about twenty miles further on and climbs it to reach Gharian. From here one can see how this open, sparsely inhabited plain lies between the chain of hills and the band of oases, trees and dwellings along the shore and realise that in this latter narrow belt is found all the human life of northern Tripolitania.

The Oasis of Tripoli is twenty-five square miles in extent, containing a million palm-trees and nearly four thousand wells, which shows the amount of water to be found below the surface in the coastal belt. There are large enclosures where the camel and sheep markets are held, and the *Suk el Giuma* (the "Friday Market"), where fruit, vegetables and agricultural products are sold and which gathers an interesting collection of country folk of many and varied types. The road to the east, which has left the city by the Benito Gate, passes through the oases, through villages and by gardens which grow food for the capital. Along this road there is a constant stream of traffic, of motor-cars, lorries, strings of laden camels, and country folk going to, or coming away from, Tripoli.

Thirteen miles out is Tagiura, at which the short railway from the city ends. Here in its oasis stands a large mosque with forty-eight marble pillars, taken, probably, from the ruined city of Leptis Magna farther to the east. It was built in the sixteenth century by Murad Aga, Chief of Tagiura, who for a short time was the first regent for the Sultan of Turkey after the capture of Tripoli by Sinan Pasha in A.D. 1550.

The road continues eastward, never far from the sea, through cultivation and sand-dunes pinned down by creeping plants sown for the purpose by the Agricultural Department as the first step

towards reclaiming the soil. To the right can now be seen the beginning of the mountain chain, the Jebel, which, low here, goes on to the west to attain an elevation of 2800 feet in the extinct volcano of Takut.

The road reaches the town of Homs, with a population of only seven thousand, and a small harbour which serves to shelter the boats of the tunny fishing-fleet. It is a small place built around a quiet piazza. In it was quartered the first battalion of Blackshirts ever to be sent to Tripolitania—or, I think, anywhere overseas. They came in a steamer from Naples in the spring of 1925; and the same ship carried H.E. Guiseppe Volpi, Governor of Tripolitania, returning from a visit to Rome. While these Fascisti Militia were on board they were responsible for an incident that might have had serious consequences and now has a significance which at the time seems to have escaped the notice of the British Government. Anti-English sentiment in Italy is now believed to have begun at the time of the Abyssinian War and the Sanctions. It must be remembered that in 1925 the relations between Rome and London were perfectly friendly. At that time the Militia had not been established long; and they had been carefully coached in the Fascist doctrines by their leaders, of whom Mussolini was the inspirer.

Now this fine flower of the black-shirted Italian youth were being given their first glimpse of the outside world in a ship which, as was usual, called at Malta on its way to Tripoli and dropped anchor in the harbour. As it was to stay for a few hours only, the men of the militia were not allowed ashore. So, perhaps to amuse themselves, they formed up and began to march round and round the decks behind their flag, shouting, loudly "*Evviva la Malta italiana!*" which means "Long live Italian Malta!" And this was in a port belonging to a friendly nation, which only a few years previously had been an ally and gone to Italy's assistance after the disaster of Caporetto.

The Fascist youths continued their performance so long and so noisily that they attracted the attention of everyone in and around the harbour. Soon crowds of Maltese boatmen, fishermen and others gathered on the shore and on the battlements high up over the port; and, as the Maltese do not like the Italians and the island never belonged to Italy, they shouted "Hurrah for British Malta!"

This angered the Fascists and incited them to still further vocal efforts; and they lined the rails and screamed more loudly than ever at the incensed crowds on shore. The infuriated Maltese got dangerous and called for boats to convey them out to attack the Italian ship. It nearly became a dangerous riot; and it took all the efforts of the police on shore to prevent the angry Maltese carrying out their threats.

The Chief of Police hurriedly sent off a polite message to Governor Volpi on board, requesting him to have the goodness to persuade the Militia to desist from their provocative attitude. But His Excellency returned a rude reply to the effect that the Fascist youths, being in an Italian ship, were on Italian soil and therefore free to do as they wished! He made no attempt to check his fellow-countrymen, who redoubled their shouts and did not desist until the vessel left the port. Only the greatest efforts of the police restrained the crowds on shore from carrying out their intention of storming the steamer.

The action of the Militia might be passed over as the rowdy behaviour of irrepressible youths, but the official sanction given it by H.E. Guiseppe Volpi—he had not yet been created a Count—made it more serious. Remember the cries of “Nice! Corsica! Tunis!” raised before the war!

No mention of the incident appeared in the British press, so it may be presumed that the authorities of the island managed to suppress it. But a small local journal belonging to a Maltese published a full account of it a few days later, and this I read in Valetta as soon as it appeared. And one of the principal Paris dailies—I think it was *Le Journal*—also gave a full account of it. In Malta I was given full confirmation of the affair. I had seen this Militia battalion in Homs shortly after it landed; it was drilling in the little piazza of the town and I did not think that the men in its ranks looked very formidable. It has occurred to me since that the incident shows that even at that early date hostility to England was being instilled into the youths of the Fascist organisation which was meant to be the Prætorian Guard of the Duce.

A mile or so from Homs in the sand-dunes by the sea are the ruins of the buried town of Leptis Magna, excavated by the late Government of the Colony.

From Homs the road goes on to Misurata, a hundred and thirty miles from Tripoli and with the second largest population in the province, although the inhabitants number only seventeen thousand. It has a harbour somewhat larger than that of Homs, but serving mostly the same purpose, namely, sheltering the boats for the tunny fishing, which is the principal industry of the town, although there is also a carpet, a tobacco, and a motor-car factory. The character of the great coastal plain, which up to this has been level, open and unobstructed, now changes. Around the Misurata oasis, which measures eleven miles by four miles, are natural defences against attack. They consist of salt marshes extending a hundred miles along the coast and running inland for twenty miles.

And from here to the Cyrenaica frontier on the east side of the great indentation of the Gulf of Sidra there are a series of

salt marshes and of deep *wadis* or dry river beds, with precipitous cliff-like banks enclosing them. Two examples are the Wadis Kebir and Zemzem used by General Rommel in his retreat to Tripoli in January 1943.

The cause of this sudden change of character of the plain is a deep depression in the Sahara extending to the Gulf of Sidra, and causing this deep indentation of the coast and two large "faults" which enclose it on either side and are known as the Misurata and Benghazi faults. These run back far into the centre of the great desert, which has subsided along their course, and make a separation between the mountain mass of the Ahagger and of the Tibesti. And the beds of limestone and sandstone of these masses incline inward to subterranean basins which hold reserves of water which supply a line of oases going north towards the Gulf of Sidra and forming the natural caravan route to the coast.

The trend of this water is down the slope towards the sea, and, impregnated with the mineral salts that abound in the earth of the desert, it seeps up to the surface and forms these salt marshes that mar the eastern ending of the great coastal plain.

To Misurata comes the shortest and, next to the Nile, the oldest caravan route from the Sudan. It is also the ideal one, because it passes by all these well-watered oases along the natural depression; and, too, it is the shortest, because it is directed along them to the most southerly point of the Gulf of Sidra, and this deep indentation cuts off two or three hundred miles to the Mediterranean coast, compared with any other of the various routes, as, for instance, that of Ghat and Ghadames to the Gulf of Gabès. But, of course, its chief advantage is the presence of water along it.

Therefore the Government of Libya had turned it into a motor road, and by it one can drive in a car and troops and transport can move rapidly along it, between Misurata and Murzuk, the former Turkish capital of the Fezzan. The Italians turned other Saharan routes into roads for motor traffic, but this is the only one which goes directly to the interior.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BIRTHPLACE OF AN EMPEROR

ACROSS the sun-steeped Forum of the ancient town of Leptis Magna a small boy walked towards the harbour through the crowds of citizens passing in and out of the Law Courts and of Berber peasants taking a short-cut to the market. It was about the middle of the second century A.D. The small lad, dark-haired, deeply tanned and dressed in the costume of a Roman child of the better class was not yet in his 'teens. He made his way through the throng to the little harbour, in which merchant ships from Alexandria, Carthage and Sicily lay moored to the quays, and sailors of many races helped the gangs of native workers to load the cargoes of grain that were destined for the hungry mouths of Rome. The boy walked slowly along the quay, pausing to look at each vessel as he passed, but stopped longest beside a war-trireme which was preparing for sea and loading her last stores. He stared at the half-naked slaves crouching over the huge oars to which they were chained. Then he moved on by a group of her officers chatting to a centurion of the detachment of the Augusta Legion garrisoning Leptis Magna. As he reached them he glanced up shyly at the soldier and raised his arm in the Roman salute. The centurion nodded carelessly in reply ; and one of the naval men smiled and spoke kindly to the lad, who only shook his head and quickened his pace.

The centurion said to the naval officer who had spoken to him, " He does not understand Latin."

" Indeed ? How is that ? He looks a Roman boy."

" He is. He is the son of a Roman knight who has lived here for years. The child was born here ; his mother is dead and his father is too busy to look after him. The son is left entirely to the native servants and speaks only their language, which is a mixture of Punic and Berber, I believe."

The group of officers looked with interest and a little pity at the lad, who had reached the end of the pier and was standing looking out over the sea. What would these men have said if a soothsayer had told them that this child would one day be the Emperor of Rome and rule the earth from Phasania far in the south to Britannia and Caledonia ? They would have laughed the idea to scorn. Yet this was the lot which destiny had fated should be the boy's.

The officers' attention had wandered from him.

" Here are the slingers ! " cried the centurion ; and all looked

along the quay to the detachment of men, natives of the Balearic Isles, marching towards them.

They carried their scanty baggage with them, and at their sides swung leather bags filled with stones for their slings. These islanders were some of the light troops which proved so useful to the Roman army in all its wars. They were now going on board the trireme as marines to engage at long range the pirate ships of which she was about to sail in search. For these corsairs were already as great a scourge of the narrow waters of the Eastern Mediterranean as in later centuries their Barbary successors were to prove in the Western.

Behind them marched a party of infantry, sturdy, bronzed veterans carrying spears, swords and shields and wearing metal helmets, breast-pieces and greaves. The soldiers went straight on board and formed up on the fore-deck.

The boy ran from the end of the pier to see them; for anything military had a great attraction for him. He lingered until they had all disappeared below and the sailors cast off the hawser and the galley-slaves got ready to bend to their oars.

To the measured beat of the great sweeps the warship passed the Pharos, the tower on the top of which fires were lit at nights to serve as a beacon, and disappeared. Then the boy reluctantly left the harbour and walked back through the town to the villa which was his home. In the *atrium* he met his father, whom he had not seen since the early morning. He respectfully saluted his elder, who beckoned him to approach and looked at him sternly.

"Lucius, I am displeased with you. Your tutor tells me that you do not study your Latin. It is disgraceful that my son cannot speak his native language. Do you intend to spend your life here in Africa like a Berber peasant? Have you no ambition? Now, in future I shall talk to you only in Latin. I have ordered the servants to do the same. Any who disobey me will be discharged and sold as slaves. I want to send you when you are older to study and make a career for yourself in Rome. But if you will not attend to your lessons now you will remain here and labour on my farm all your life."

The child made no answer, but, when his father dismissed him, went thoughtfully to his room. He was trembling. Only that day as he stood on the pier and looked over the sea his thoughts had been busy with the strange lands beyond it, of which the sailors, with whom he loved to chat, had often told him. He had longed for the day when he would be old enough to travel and see their wonders for himself.

So his father's threat sounded very terrible to him. He had no wish to spend the rest of his life in Tripolitania like a Berber

peasant. And from that day he worked hard at his lessons and before long spoke Latin quite well, although he retained his Libyan accent to the end of his life. He also kept up his interest in military matters, and when he grew older learned to ride like a Numidian raider and to use the sword and spear. He studied the books of military writers and knew Cæsar's by heart. He trained himself to endure hardship and danger and developed his powers of observation and of leadership by taking part in expeditions into the forests and the hills to hunt the elephants, lions and leopards that abounded and were sought for, not to be killed, but to be taken alive for the local amphitheatres and for Rome. In doing this he gained experience and a training that served him well in war in those later days when he commanded armies in the field.

His father learned to take pride in him ; and when the young Lucius Septimius Severus was eighteen or twenty he obtained his boyhood's desire by being sent to Rome to continue his studies there. Yet when his ship sailed out of the harbour of Leptis Magna he looked back with a certain regret at the town of his birth.

He set his foot on the lowest rung of the ladder of success when he received his first official appointment and was sent to Spain as a Military Quæstor, that is, a financial officer with troops. But he was obliged to return to Leptis Magna on his father's death there. When he had settled his affairs and sold his property he was recalled to act as Quæstor again, now in Sardinia. This time he left his birthplace almost reluctantly ; for during his years of absence in Rome and Spain he often felt quite homesick, much to his surprise, and found that his birthplace was very dear to his heart. This feeling remained always with him in later years ; he never forgot Leptis Magna and eagerly sought every opportunity to revisit it. When he had the power he did much to benefit it and Tripolitania.

His fellow townsmen were deeply interested in his career and eagerly watched his further progress up the ladder of fame. When the news came of his promotion to the office of Colonial Praetor, which was a mixture of magistrate and consul, they hoped that they would see him one day borne through their Forum in his ivory chair, wearing his purple-banded toga and escorted by his six lictors, which were the symbols of his new rank. Then when later he became Legate and Governor of the province of Pannonia, between the Danube and northern Italy, and had three legions under his command, each citizen of his home town swelled with pride and felt that he could take a share of the credit to himself. It certainly was a case of " Local Boy Makes Good." And on his next visit home Lucius Septimius Severus passed through delirious crowds when he landed from

his ship and proceeded through the Forum to be received in state by the city fathers.

And when finally, in A.D. 193, came the astounding news that his army had proclaimed him Emperor the pride and joy of the people of this town on the south shore of the Mediterranean knew no bounds. To think that from among them had come a ruler of the empire of the world !

Now began the period of his life that has left most trace of his connection with Leptis Magna. By his order it was practically rebuilt, but on a more magnificent scale. Marble largely replaced brick. Near the sea a splendid palace arose to house the new Emperor ; the Basilica, now renamed Severian after him, and other public edifices around the Forum were rebuilt, the theatre enlarged and that indispensable adjunct of a Roman city, the Baths, greatly improved. Triumphal arches were erected and dedicated to the sovereign, and the harbour made worthy to receive him on his next visit by new quays, landing steps, a taller lighthouse and a new temple of Greek architecture in the Doric style, for the use of sailors desirous of worshipping and making offerings to Neptune for their safe voyaging before they set out and thanking the gods for their safe return when they got back.

When next he came to Leptis Magna, Septimius Severus was graciously pleased to approve of the way in which its citizens had carried out his plans. For he himself had either suggested or inspected them. For no matter in what part of his vast dominions he happened to be he insisted that every design of their proposed new works should be submitted to him for his approval, and the new city was really the child of his brain. Nor was Tripoli neglected ; he embellished it also with splendid buildings and much fine statuary, of which nothing remains to-day.

It is astonishing that he was able to give any of his time and his thoughts to these small spots ; for he had to fight with three competitors for the throne, conquer Syria and Mesopotamia and marry two wives. Enough to engage one man's whole attention, one would think. And, as well, he had the government of his large and unruly empire to occupy him. But he contrived to find enough leisure to pay visits from time to time to Tripolitania and was true to the end to the land of his birth.

Italy, Spain, Gaul, the Balkans, Syria and Mesopotamia had all known him in turn. Now, in A.D. 208, England and Scotland were to come into the romantic story of the African boy ; for in that year both countries saw him with his battling armies. He was well on in his sixties, his health was very bad, and he was racked with anxiety about the future of his empire and of his sons. For they, Geta and Caracalla, were bitterly jealous

of each other and quarrelled fiercely, while the latter was openly mutinous and hostile to his father. The strain was too much for the sick old man. In A.D. 211, at the age of sixty-five, in the cold of a February day in northern England, so different from the pleasant climate of his birthplace, Cæsar Lucius Septimius Severus died in York.

With his death Leptis Magna certainly lost a good friend ; but the world goes on no matter who dies and the history of the town did not end with the passing of her most famous son. Many changes came with the years. The worship of the heathen gods was swept away by Christianity, the Roman era was succeeded by the Vandal, and that by the Byzantine. At last came the fatal day when destruction fell on the age-long city that had withstood the storms of so many centuries. Now in the eighth century after Christ the blind fury of barbarous religious fanatics struck it and it ceased to exist. How the end came no one knows, I think. It did not perish by fire, because there is no trace of flames on the ruins that can be seen to-day. No human bones have yet been found among the stones, no skeleton such as Pompeii can show, so the mystery of the disappearance of the inhabitants remains unsolved. Another matter I wondered at—there are many statues of heathen gods intact ; it is puzzling that they escaped the iconoclastic fury of the Christians who ended their worship. Then there are no signs of attempts to destroy the buildings ; the Baths are still standing with their walls and pillars thirty feet high. Time seems to have been the chief enemy. But much of the materials—the marbles, the bricks, the pillars—were taken for use elsewhere—one remembers the forty-eight columns of the Mosque of Tagiura. No doubt, in later years, many houses were erected in the vicinity, and much was taken from the deserted city to build them.

But they, too, have disappeared, and there is no trace of them near the site of the dead town ; for all is desert, sandy desert, around.

But still much remains of the ruined Leptis Magna to interest us to-day and recall the dramatic story of the boy who became Emperor.

There is no romantic tale of the discovery of the ruins ; apparently it was always known that they existed and where. But the city stood on sand ; and in the course of centuries the primeval forests surrounding it disappeared and gradually the sand left bare drifted up to the obstacles presented by the standing walls and little by little was piled up against the obstructions, and in time overtopped and buried them. The idea that in deserts like the Sahara the simoon sweeps the sand swiftly before its burning breath, and in a few hours or less overwhelms and

entombs a whole caravan of men and camels, so that when the storm passes there is nothing left of them but a huge new mound, is a fantastic error. So it was only in the course of very many years that these ruins were buried forty feet deep, and remained so until the shovels of the excavators revealed them again to daylight.

It was in the early twenties of the present century that the Italian authorities sanctioned the expenditure necessary for the methodical disinterring of this town that had given birth to a Cæsar. It was a long task, and was not near completion when war came again to Tripolitania. No one can say when it will be begun again. But it will prove an easier and cheaper undertaking than were the excavation of Pompeii and Herculaneum, the latter buried in molten lava which solidified to the consistency of granite, the former in cinders and ashes. Naturally the sand will be easier to remove.

It is a matter that concerns the world. I have seen the vanished cities of Algeria, Morocco and other countries; but none of them compare in interest, in beauty and in the addition to our knowledge with Leptis Magna. The treasures already laid bare are incomparable. The sand has preserved and guarded from harm all that it has buried; so that the beautiful marble statuary and carvings are brought to light as white and perfect as if they had come fresh from the sculptor's studio. I saw one exquisite Venus disinterred the previous day that was so free from blemish, so lovely, that it was hard to believe that it was the work of a man who had died eleven hundred years ago, and that it had been hidden from sight for nearly as long a time.

Close to the sea-beach rounded dunes, clothed in green by the closely-growing ground creeper employed everywhere by the Agricultural Department to prevent the sand drifting, form, with a background of scattered palm-trees, a picturesque setting for the ruins of Leptis to-day. These have not yet been sufficiently excavated to give a general view of the plan of the town. Here is half an archway standing up, built of square blocks of stone, at its base a marble frieze beautifully carved with twining vine branches, leaves and bunches of grapes, and strewn around are fluted pillars of marble, lying flat and shorn of their capitals. Here are great columns emerging from their sandy bed, supporting a long marble peristyle on which is carved deeply and clearly the inscription "IMPERATOR CÆSAR AUGUSTUS LUCIUS SEPTIMIUS . . ."—the marble block is broken here. This was believed to have formed part of the palace; but now it is considered that it bounded the Forum. Near the site of the imperial residence were found many marble columns with exquisitely carved capitals; some of the pillars were four-sided, with beautiful

designs of medallions enclosing flowers in which human heads and groups of tiny animals are inset. Each column is a gallery of gems of art.

Near the entrance to the city stand the remains of Janus—the four-fronted arch dedicated to Septimius Severus. A large part of the Forum and the Basilica Severiana have been uncovered and, seen deep down in the dug sand, are the paved roads leading to them ; and there are numerous columns, pilasters, arches and entablatures, many carved and adorned with floral ornamentations and animals. From the Basilica can be seen the remains of the Theatre.

The best preserved of all inside the faintly traced walls of the city are the Baths, which existed before the birth of Septimius Severus, but were enlarged and improved by him. Long hidden in the sand, its thirty-foot walls stand up over the plain and can be seen for a distance from every side, for there is nothing to obstruct the view. Even the patches of camel-thorn are only a couple of feet high. The strongly-built basement runs along roads paved with limestone ; and from them steps lead up to the principal halls, of which the best-preserved are the *tepidarium*, or cooling room, and the *calidaria*, or hot rooms. But the finest of all are the large swimming-pools, paved and walled with marble and with marble steps leading down to the water, for which at the base of the walls are the holes for its ingress and egress. The life-size marble statues of various gods found in the *piscina* have been replaced in the niches and on the pedestals where they stood formerly. Tall pillars surround the pools, which even now can be filled with, and hold, water ; and one can picture the perspiring old-time citizens coming from the hands of the masseurs and the heat of the *calidaria* and gasping with the shock of the cold water as they plunge into it. One can imagine them refreshed by their bath, doing gymnastics or physical exercises or, if they are past the age for that, lingering half-naked to listen complacently to some local poet declaiming his latest ode in praise of "*our* Emperor."

To gaze without imagination at the ruins of a vanished city is as uninspiring as looking at fossils in the glass cases of a museum. So when passing on to the ancient harbour now clearly visible with its quays, its landing-steps, its mooring-places, where the rubbing of hawsers has worn away the stone, the lighthouse tower and the pretty Doric temple where the mariners prayed to the gods, one must call up a vision of the fat merchant ships rubbing their sides against the piers and the trireme with its soldiers and weary galley-slaves. And, too, the group of officers beside it looking with contempt or pity at the lonely figure of the little boy standing, dark against the bright sea, at the end of the quay. The half-barbarian child who could speak no Latin,

yet rose to rule the whole known world as Emperor of the Romans and die in far-off England.

And in January 1943 soldiers from the Britain that he had ruled and the Caledonia that he had invaded marched triumphantly through the city that was his birthplace to return his visit.

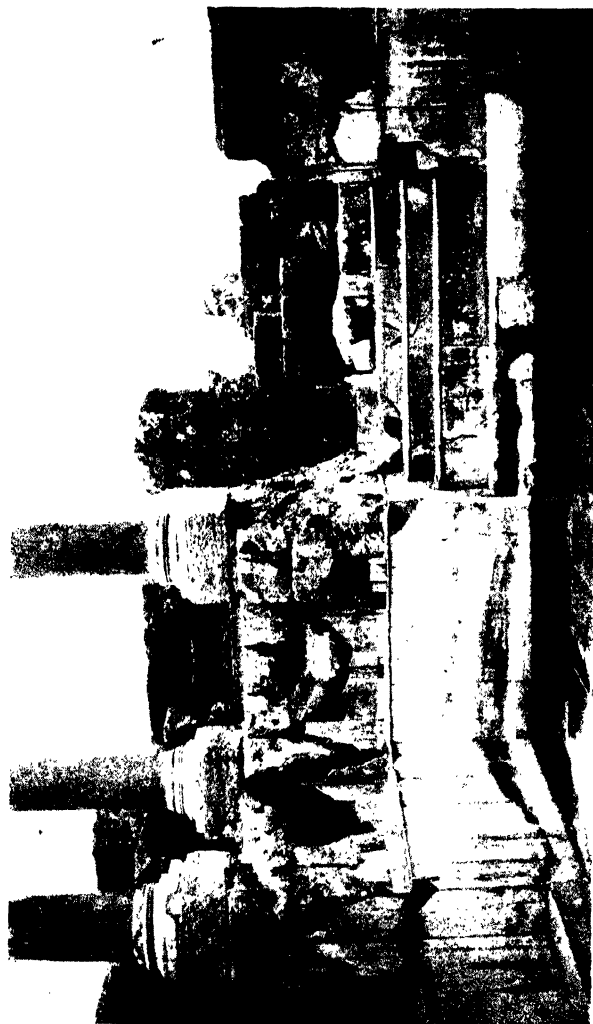


Photo by the Author

LEPTIS MAGNA
THE SWIMMING-POOL OF THE BATHS

See page 79



Photo by the Author

THE JEBEL

AT THE FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN WALL. THE ROAD TO THE SOUTH CLIMBS THE MOUNTAINS

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CHAPTER IX

THE COUNTRY OF THE CAVE-DWELLERS

The Second Zone

ACROSS the open coastal plain of northern Tripolitania nature has scrawled a gigantic capital letter S. Its top almost touches the sea near Leptis Magna and the centre bulges out to the south opposite Tripoli, fifty miles from the coast, then its lower part wavers uncertainly towards the interior in the west. It is written in mountains. For it is the Jebel, the precipitous range which ends the plain stretching to it from the sea. Viewing it from a plane in the air above or on a map, its plan is decidedly an S.

It begins, this line of mountains, on the east close to the Mediterranean, near Homs and Leptis Magna, where the shore from Tripoli draws back south-eastward to meet it, then towards the west it curves to the south and afterwards to the westward until, right behind the capital, its steep foothills begin. Behind them it rises everywhere in a succession of irregular peaks, jagged-pointed summits, separated by deep gashes—the *wadis*, or ravines, torn in its face by water rushing down after storms to the plain. Sheer cliffs, striped with layers of red and white sandstone and brown limestone, below them hem in the ravines, black basalt and the craters of extinct volcanoes. Everywhere a jumbled mass of mountains climbing up ever higher as though trying to look over each other's heads until the highest crest tops them all—the dead volcano Tekút, 2800 feet above the sea.

Over the plain the range stands up steep and sheer like a wall. It is a storehouse of history, for here persecuted peoples took refuge, battles were fought, conquering armies passed through and left little trace. Yet there are wrecked tombs of Roman centurions, ruined walls of Berber castles, fragments of Arab villages, tumbled bastions of Turkish forts on commanding points and, most ancient and mysterious of all, cracked stone slabs scored with deep grooves to carry away the blood of victims of the sacrificial offerings of some long-forgotten faith.

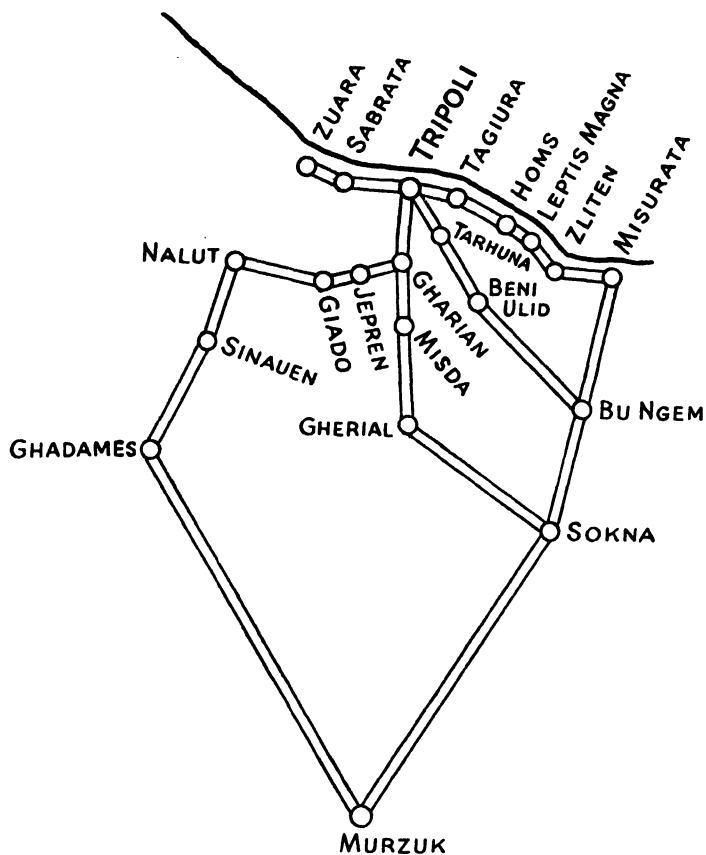
From Tripoli the motor highway to the deserts of the south runs towards the Jebel, as the range is called, crossing and recrossing the railway to Azizia, past the white buildings of the Agricultural Concession with the wide fields of barley on either hand, and on over the green plain until it comes up against the wall of mountains that stretches away on either side in rounded bastions and deep re-entrants. Then the road turns and twists

up the steep slopes, a testimony to the Italian capacity for road-building inherited from their Roman ancestors. For it is a model of engineering skill and the task was carried out by the Alpine regiments after the first invasion of Tripolitania in 1911. Serpentine up the steep side of the Jebel, always rising higher, it climbs to a height of two thousand feet, with the changing views of the mass of mountains above, below, on either side until it reaches a comparatively level stretch of ground with the high peaks towering over it all around.

And here long lines of olive-trees radiate in every direction, trees with thick, gnarled trunks and twisted branches ; for they are very old and, it is said, many date from the days when Ancient Rome ruled the land. And in the welcome shade of their grey-green leaves her perspiring soldiers took off their helmets to wipe their foreheads after the stiff climb up from the plain and sat down gratefully for a brief rest on their long march to the distant Fezzan. And fields of barley lie all around and vegetables and fruit-trees stretch on either side, showing how fertile is the soil tilled since prehistoric days.

This is the Gharian region. The Targhona district is to the east, down to the neighbourhood of Leptis Magna. With so much cultivation here a stranger is struck by the curious fact that no villages, no stray huts even, are visible ; and the puzzling question is where do the peasants who till the earth live ; for there must be many to do all the work. On the green stretches of grass among the trees one can see from the road low mounds of earth heaped up here and there. Approaching them you find that near them are square pits about thirty feet deep and forty to fifty feet across. Looking over the edge of one of these you see that its straight, steep sides, going sheer down to the bottom of the pit, are pierced by large square or upright rectangular holes showing cavern-like dark recesses inside.

For these are the dwellings of the cultivators, of the Troglydites or Cave-dwellers of the mountain zone, who live in these strange pits, not in caverns in the sides of the hills, as one usually pictures caves. But the idea is ingenious and practical. Beside each pit a narrow, sloping tunnel is dug down to the level of the bottom of the pit, then out through a fairly large opening into the pit, forming a doorway on to the bottom. Then off this tunnel at different levels excavations are carried out to form rooms, and in each of these chambers an opening is broken out into the face of the pit to make a window. Thus a dwelling of several stories is constructed, with a ground floor and two or more upper stories with doors leading out on to the sloping tunnel and windows opening on to the pit, giving light and air. Finally, at the upper surface entrance a strong door is fixed, which can be firmly closed on the inside.



Motor Roads of TRIPOLITANIA
on old caravan tracks

Every evening before dark each occupier of a subterranean dwelling or part of it drives his herd of goats or flock of sheep into and down the tunnel to the bottom of the pit, which becomes their fold for the night. The last home-comer, when he enters, firmly fastens the door behind him and, having driven his animals down to the common fold, goes to join his family in their room, having done all that a prudent householder should do and can now sleep in security until the morning.

Then with the new day the upper door that gives on the outer world is opened, the men drive their herds and flocks up and out to graze in charge of the children, and the women come to the surface to draw water from the near-by communal well and go down below again to cook their menfolk's midday meal. Thus at no expenditure except of manual labour one or more families are provided with a commodious dwelling that is cool in hot weather and can be made reasonably warm in winter—which is often cold at this height—is fireproof and secure against robbers who would try to steal their animals in the night. I was much struck with all these advantages when I first went down into one of these dwellings. In an attack by brigands or tribal enemies the entrance could be held for a long time against them; and, if it were finally forced, the assailants would have a hard task in fighting their way down the narrow unlighted tunnel in which they could be fired on or speared in the dark from every unseen doorway. Even if during the night the outside enemies were lowered into the pit by ropes they could not haul up the only booty, that is, the animals, the same way. And they would be shot down from the windows above their heads. The dwelling itself could not be set on fire, as a hut on the surface could be.

Altogether it is an ideal system of housing the population in a land that never in its history has known law and order, where war is never long absent and where brigandage is always rife. What people invented it? The German traveller, Barth, who journeyed through the Jebel in 1855 on his way to Central Africa to carry out a mission for the English Government only makes a casual reference to "subterranean villages," as he calls them. I do not know what authority he has for saying that "they seem to me to have originated principally with the Jews, who from time immemorial had become intimately connected with the Berbers, many of the Berber tribes having adopted the Jewish creed; and just in the same way as they are found mingling with the Berbers in these regions—for the original inhabitants of the Gharian belong in entirety to the Berber race—on friendly terms. . . ."

This does not seem to be very conclusive proof. The first Jews in Tripolitania were the few employees of the traders from Sidon—clerks, accountants and storekeepers, certainly not agriculturists,

and so would not be likely to go and live in the mountains as cultivators. And even when in much later times more Jewish immigrants came to Africa after the fall of Jerusalem and other disasters to their race had driven them from Palestine they did not go into the interior and the mountains to dig and plough, but remained in Tripoli and the other towns and villages as tailors, shopkeepers, artificers, moneylenders and bankers. The Berbers only took to Judaism, those of them who did, after the Vandal invasion. But African cave-dwellers were known to Herodotus, Aristotle and Diodorus, the last of whom tells of a pastoral race living on the shores of the Red Sea who were Troglodytes. Near Gabès in the south of Tunisia and in Tlemçen in north-west Algeria are tribes who to this day reside in caves. I do not know if any Jewish records tell of their people having ever had any propensity for living underground.

It is much more likely that the Berbers, persecuted and hunted by the Carthaginians and their Roman successors, devised these subterranean dwellings themselves or developed them from legends handed down from ancestors in other lands who also had to hide from enemies.

To the west of the Gharian region lies Nalut, to-day linked up by a motor road. In this district is a ruined castle in which Berbers fought for their freedom many years ago. To-day it is such a shattered wreck that it is difficult to believe that it could ever have been a strong fortress. But now from a distance one would imagine that it has come alive again, for around and in and out of it human figures move, appear and disappear. But they might only be phantoms, as, clad in white draperies, they seem to walk up and down the faces of the broken walls, emerging suddenly from holes in them and vanishing as suddenly. A nearer view, however, shows that they are living beings shrouded in long *barricani*, their heads muffled in hoods, and they are actually entering and leaving apertures at different heights in the ramparts or in the sheer cliffs on which the castle stands. For they also are cave-dwellers, living in cells gouged out in the walls or the face of the cliffs. To reach these the occupants climb up and down rough ladders formed by a few poles driven into crevices of the buildings or between the rocks as footholds, with the aid of which they ascend or descend with ease.

Like the underground-dwellers on the road to Gharian their complexions are light, their eyes grey or blue, their hair and beards sandy or fair. For, like most of the inhabitants of the Jebel, they are Berbers.

Into these mountains their forefathers were driven by the Arab invaders of the eleventh century if they wished to save their lives and remain free, just as their kinsmen in northern Algeria had to take refuge in the hilly fastnesses of Kabylia or the Aurès.

These Berbers were not the original inhabitants of the land; they were invaders themselves like all the succeeding waves of immigrants, but they are the earliest known to history.

They were a race of people who emerged from the Caucasus—their colouring tells that they were truly Caucasian—and wandered about Europe until they reached Spain. How long they remained there no one can tell. But eventually they came into North Africa—perhaps it was then linked to Europe by solid land where to-day are the Straits of Gibraltar. They were fierce warriors, tall, blue-eyed, fair, clad in skins of wild beasts slain by them in hunts, and protecting their heads in battle by the skulls of these animals. And here we get the explanation of the legend of the fair-complexioned, blue-eyed Hercules, wearing the lion's skin, who saw the Giant Atlas supporting the world on his shoulders.

Megalithic monuments, stone weapons, axes and implements found in Morocco and Algeria help to prove their kinship with the Iberians and Celtiberians, for these are similar to those discovered in the Morbihans, the Pyrenees and southern Spain.

When they arrived in Africa they mingled with the peoples then inhabiting it, who were dominated by the strong personality and warlike quality of the newcomers, who gradually spread over the northern regions of the continent and split up into groups to find a living. Those who settled in the fertile strip between the mountains and the sea took to husbandry and built themselves houses, villages, towns—they were known as Getulians. Those who took to the high tablelands and hills bred and herded sheep and cattle, wandered in search of pasture and lived in tents—they were termed Numidians, or nomads.

The configuration of the new lands, with their high mountains, dense forests and lack of navigable rivers which would facilitate inter-communication, served to split these barbarians, Beraber or Berbers, into small tribes, further divided when they did meet by jealousies and quarrels. They were not linked by any feeling of nationality, kinship or mutual religious belief. So the Berabers, soon scattered over great distances, could never join together against a common enemy. And, similarly, their descendants in Tripolitania, Algeria and Morocco were never able to unite in their own defence. On the contrary, when invaders came, they were often joined by Berber tribes, who hoped with their aid to snatch a victory over some of their neighbours with whom they happened to have a quarrel at the moment. Then afterwards they could not rid themselves of the strangers, who soon attacked them in their turn. For this reason Sidi Okba's raiding party, which is all it really was, drove through North Africa from east to west and was never stopped until it reached the Atlantic.

Through the centuries the Berbers fought each other in the Jebel, the people of one village made war on the next and often

appealed to Arab villagers to aid them, generally ending by fighting their temporary allies.

There was always war in these mountains. When the Turkish rule in Tripolitania was restored in the nineteenth century they were obliged to build forts among the hills to keep in subjection their newly regained subjects who were so unjustly treated that they were always in revolt. Here in the Jebel the Arabs fought them again and again, only to be crushed and see their villages looted and burned.

At the southern end of the Gharian region stand the ruins of the Casr (Castle) Gharian, which had been a high-walled rectangular fort with a round tower at each corner and was built on the very edge of a precipitous cliff enclosing one side of a deep and wide ravine filled with trees. In it the Turkish Governor of the district lived, with a garrison of two hundred soldiers to keep order.

The highway to the south, which comes from Tripoli and passes through the country of "the Pit-dwellers" as we have seen, goes on to Gharian, which until 1927 or 1928 marked the limit of Italy's hold on Tripolitania. Here the road ended. For all the country south of it was in the power of the rebels against her rule. So here was the headquarters of military and civil administrative districts under a general and a civil commissioner. There was no town or even a village, although the pit-dwellings were plentiful all around. A few stone houses stood together—the residences of the General, the Commissioner and the military and civil officers, the Military Club, a mosque and a military hospital, which was formerly the house of a rebel chief who had been hanged for treason. Close by were the beehive huts of the soldiers of a battalion of native troops. But in recent years it had the promise of a lucrative future as a summer resort for Italian residents in Tripoli and other towns in the coastal plain; and a hotel had been built for them, for it is much cooler than at sea-level. In winter it has frosts and sometimes snow.

It had formerly only one road, the highway from Tripoli. There was none to Fezzan, by which motorised, or even any wheeled transport could go to support a military attack on the rebels there. No one even seemed to know along which route such a road could be built. But in March 1925 a party of twelve Italian officers and soldiers, with a photographer and a journalist, started out from Tripoli in one Ford and five Fiat motor-cars, all with ordinary tyres. They were setting out on a daring expedition to Ghadames in the Fezzan, a distance of well over three hundred miles from the capital, and although the country they would have to traverse was in the hands of the rebels they took only nine rifles with them. But the enemies they encountered were not men but obstacles placed by nature in their way. In one place they had to

surmount great dunes, some of them six hundred feet high, and the going was so difficult that it sometimes took thirty hours to cover five hundred *yards*. Only by putting down nets on the sand were they able to make any progress. But eventually they got to Ghadames and back and found the route needed. And later on a good road was built along it, by which Italian troops were able to move swiftly into the Fezzan and crush the patriots there who had so long resisted Italy's might.

In recent years two more good motor roads have been constructed to the south, passing through the desert to Murzuk, the former Turkish capital of the Fezzan. One starts out westward through Jefren and Giado to Nalut, then goes south through Sinauen to Ghadames, and thence south-east to Murzuk. The other leads south to Misda and Gherial, thence south-east to Sokna, from which it bears south-west to Murzuk.

So Gharian, sixty-five miles from Tripoli and 2350 feet above the sea, is of more importance than ever. Armies of many races have marched through it to the deserts to the south. Now it will see the soldiers of the British nation pass for the first time in its history.

It stands on the southern edge of the Second, the Mountain, Zone, and looks down on the Third, the stony stretches of the dreadful Hammada-el-Homra.

THE RED DESERT AND THE FEZZAN

*Third Zone—The Hammada-el-Homra.**Fourth Zone—The Fezzan.*

SOUTH of Gharian lie two deserts which make up the remainder of Tripolitania. But they differ greatly.

The more northerly is the Hammada-el-Homra—the Red Hammada. This word denotes a wide plateau of bare sheet rock which is scoured and polished by the strong desert winds until not one grain of sand is left on it. It is coated by some chemical substance exuded by the porous stone and forced out by capillary action. In this desert it is oxide of iron which covers with a red patina the surface of the rock everywhere, and thus gains the name of Hammada-el-Homra for the waste.

A desert of stone like this is more formidable and dangerous than one of sand, because in the latter any rain that falls soaks down to some lower stratum that holds the water and lets it drain off to some other spot where it comes up again by artesian action or is drawn up from wells. But on the stony surface, through which it cannot percolate, it evaporates in the hot sun and is lost to mankind. So such a desert is inhospitable to travellers, who risk death by thirst in journeying over it unless they can carry sufficient water with them.

On the other hand a *hammada* is more helpful to the modern tourist or soldier who uses motor vehicles, except in places where the sheet rock is covered with large, loose stones which destroy the tyres. Formerly several rivers flowed through this desert to the Gulf of Sidra.

On the south the Hammada-el-Homra is bounded by some detached ranges running east and west. Among them is the Jebel-es-Sod, the Black Mountain, 2800 feet in height, which gets its name from the colour of the rocks, blackened by volcanic action. The Romans called it "Mons Ater."

As a relief to the dark red of the plateau there are green patches in the Ghadama region, where the surface sinks to a lower level and water is found in the old river beds, and near it grow date-palms and corn. But there is not much of either, for in the forty thousand square miles of this barren region there is little cultivable soil or population. The inhospitable Hammada is of small value, and the caravans traversing it do not linger on the way, but hurry on to Misda or Gharian if heading north or to the Fezzan if going south.

This Fezzan is a desert also, but it differs in every way from the other. At first sight the huge, high dunes and vast stretches of sand look very terrifying, as if it would be utterly impossible to support life here. Yet it has a comparatively large population and can supply not only it but also the caravans that pass through, as they have done since before history was written. For through it run the two oldest and best-known trade routes between the Sudan and the Mediterranean, with the exception of the Nile ; it was by them that the caravans that served the Phœnician merchants at Tripoli and Lepris Magna travelled, for along them ran a string of oases well supplied with water, thanks to the underground store of it, due to the subsidence of the desert between the mountains of the Tibesti and the Ahaggar ranges caused by the geological faults running to the Gulf of Sidra and Benghazi ; and also to the shorter distance between the Sahara and the coast. They were well known to the ancient world in the days of Carthaginian supremacy. Herodotus records them. When Rome supplanted Carthage in North Africa she did not ignore the possibility of trade with the interior of this continent new to her.

Only thirty-five years after Julius Cæsar invaded Britain and found its inhabitants uncouth savages—to his way of thinking—the Romans in Tripolitania sent an army into the Fezzan to conquer it. They found an ancient civilisation already existing in it. It was the country of the Garamantes, who ruled from their capital, Jerma-Garama. The Romans called their new conquest Phasania, from which the present name is derived. In the later days of the Empire its people became Christians ; but when, after the departure of the Vandals, they regained their freedom and the Arabs came, they turned Moslems and remain so to this day. Incidentally, many became adherents of the Senussi confraternity in the last century and this answered the call of their Shaikh to fight the Italian invaders in 1911. They paid dearly for it later.

After the Arab era various small sultanates were set up by different races from north or south, each usually establishing its own capital. Thus Traghan—which was captured from its Italian garrison by the Fighting French General Leclerc's dashing column when he invaded the Fezzan in the winter of 1942 to link up with the British Eighth Army—was that of the Nesur dynasty. Zuila was the capital of the Arab rulers, Murzuk of the Beni-Mahommed sultans. This last-named town also was taken by General Leclerc on his advance from Lake Chad. When the Turks regained Tripolitania in the nineteenth century they made Murzuk their capital of the Fezzan. They had won it from the chief of an Arab tribe ; and they held it until the coming of the Italians.

What the total population of the Fezzan is would be impossible

to tell. Various estimates place it at fifty, sixty, even eighty thousand ; but no accurate census has ever been made, as far as I know ; and it would be a difficult task, as half the people are nomads.

A Saharan town is neither picturesque nor beautiful, except on the fanciful canvas of an artist who has never seen one. From the air it resembles a section of an uncovered honeycomb. The closely crowded houses are built of sun-dried mud bricks, the flat roofs of all are at the same height above the ground, the narrow lanes are mostly covered over for protection against the fierce sunshine. There is no fresh air in them. Any offal or dead beast lies there until masterless dogs devour it. Around, or usually to one side of the town, is the oasis, consisting of thousands, of tens of thousands, of date-palms in enclosures fenced in by mud walls. In their shade are fruit-trees—oranges, almonds, pomegranates—which help to shelter hedged gardens in which vegetables and grain are grown. In spring there are barley, corn, onions, carrots ; in summer sorghum, haricot beans, cabbages, maize, melons, grapes, cotton, henna and tobacco. In autumn the dates, figs and tomatoes are ripe ; in winter lentils, lucerne, flax and a second henna crop. Henna is much in demand among the women for tinting their fingers. Pumpkins, water-melons and tobacco are also grown.

These gardens are watered from wells with dipping poles worked by human labour, by *zebus*—small oxen—or camels. Huts are erected on poles three or four feet from the ground to store the grain in, safe from insects. A few villagers own some cows and *zebus*.

Some of the peasants live in hovels, built of mats of *nirokhhu* stalks or thin wands, with flat or conical roofs and surrounded by hedges of thorny or interlaced boughs. Only very occasionally is a hut built of clay.

The people of the Fezzan are of many and mixed races on the original negro foundation, with a white strain from Arab, Berber or Touareg ancestors. There is much Bornu and Teda blood. And their skins fade from black to a light coffee colour. The chief languages spoken are Arabic, Bornu and Kanuri, with a little Hausa. The usual man's costume is the *barricano* over a long shirt, a *chechia* or red fez, *babouches*, or else the *tobe* of Bornu.

Caravans, the conductors of which are Arabs or Touareg, call at the towns or villages on their way, bringing cloth, sugar, tea, soap, oil, wool, dried meat, candles and money and take dates, vegetables, fruit, *kemaria* (or country cheese) and milk in exchange. Formerly these caravans used to bring consignments of black slaves, mostly young women, as far as Tripoli ; but that infamous trade is ended now.

But dates are perhaps the most important article that they

carry away from the oases. For the date is the one essential article of food for the nomads. On a journey they carry them pressed into a sticky mass in goat- or sheepskins, and often crawling with maggots. With this they drink the milk of camels, or other animals, and eat cheese.

The inhabitants of the desert are divided into two classes, the nomads and the town-dwellers; and between them there has always been hostility. The latter would be in constant danger of attack by the manlier and more warlike rovers were it not that these must depend on the townsfolk for their supplies of food, tobacco and clothing.

Owing to the amount of water under or above the soil the number of towns in the Fezzan is quite surprising. Murzuk, considered the capital by the Turks, was continued as such by the Italians. It dates back to early in the fourteenth century, but is now neither populous nor very flourishing. It is situated in the central depression called the "Hofra," in which there are many oases. It lies on a caravan route to Tripoli and was one of the first of General Leclerc's captures with his desert column in his brilliant dash from Lake Chad in the end of 1942. Its population was recently estimated at about three thousand; but there is no certainty about the number.

Two towns which are frequently associated although they lie hundreds of miles apart are Ghadames and Ghat, the names of which are difficult to pronounce correctly because their initial letter in Arabic is the one which is sounded *rhain* or *ghain*. The old *munshi* in India who taught me Urdu with the Arabic alphabet declared that among his many pupils he found that only Irish and Scots officers could get it correctly, because they were used to pronouncing the words *lough* and *loch*, which have the sound of it exactly. In books and on maps one sometimes sees the names printed "Rhadames" and "Rhat."

These towns were for a long time a source of friction between Italy and France, as they stand almost on the border line between French Sahara and Italian Sahara. Finally it was decided after a long dispute that they were in what was then Italian territory. Their value is chiefly due to the fact that they are on a much-used caravan route to the Mediterranean coast.

Ghadames is of great antiquity, attributable to the presence of a fine natural spring which has always provided a plentiful supply of water. When it was under Roman rule its classical name was Cydamus, which is easily recognisable. It was garrisoned by men of the Third Augustan Legion. It stands in the south-west corner of an oasis which is enclosed by a sun-dried brick wall three miles in circumference. Its population is about five or six thousand; but as elsewhere in the Fezzan there is no certainty in the estimate.

It is about three hundred miles from Tripoli and stands on a plateau twelve hundred feet above sea-level. It is quite prosperous, because several caravan routes pass it and its traders are enterprising and capable.

Although its rainfall is only eight inches its oasis is flourishing because of the water supply. The mean temperature is 73° F. The Franco-Algerian frontier lies about ten miles to the west, which accounts for the number of Touareg among its population, because the bulk of that race live in the Algerian Sahara.

On the same parallel of longitude, Ghat, very much farther to the south, stands at a height of 2300 feet above the sea in a valley surrounded by sandstone plateaus, which are water reservoirs by nature. Thus there is always a plentiful supply for the inhabitants and for the passing caravans, for the route from the Sudan to Ghadames on to the sea goes by this oasis. They carry ivory, ostrich feathers and skins for tanning on their outward journey and on their return bring European goods or other imports.

The line on which Ghadames and Ghat lie stretches north and south up to the Little Sirtis in the Gulf of Gabès, and is probably another geological fault like those of the Gulf of Sidra and Benghazi at the opposite extremity of Tripolitania. If there is a similar subsidence below the surface it would account for the accumulation of water which causes the like chain of oases along the caravan route.

Other towns in the Fezzan are Zuila and Sokna, together with several villages.

In the Edeyen erg—*erg* is the Arabic term for a stretch of sand, only sand, in a desert, as *reg* signifies a hard, stony surface—there is a great accumulation of dunes. Yet here are many lakes, permanent lakes filled with water, often deep and in a few cases fresh water, but generally salt or at least brackish. These are probably artesian. There is one that is certainly peculiar; it provides meat as well as drink for humans. Not fish, but *worms*. It is called the *Bahr-el-Dud*, the Lake of the Worms. For it breeds larvæ which hatch into flying insects; but while larvæ are used as food by the people of the neighbourhood.

In this district there seems to be water everywhere, either just below the surface of the ground or filling any accidental holes. Around the lakes are generally groves of date-palms, of which the fruit is excellent.

Indeed almost the sole wealth of the Fezzan is its dates, which are universally praised. The palm is truly salvation in the African deserts. It offers the food, almost the sole food, of tens of thousands. It provides also a natural drink, that is at first very refreshing, but if left to ferment becomes most intoxicating. Trees that do not bear fruit well are tapped near the leafy crowns

and in the evening earthenware jars are tied just below the cut, and in the morning are found filled with sap that has exuded during the night. If drunk fresh it is considered a pleasant, harmless beverage; but after fermentation it is a strong intoxicant. The Arabs call it *lakmi*. It is similar to the "toddy" extracted from the coconut-palm in India, for the production of which extensive groves of palms are cultivated near Bombay.

But the date-bearing variety of the tree is not easy to grow. It does not come up from the seeds or date-stones, although the great quantity of them outside Marrakesh in southern Morocco are said to have sprung from the stones spat out by the soldiers of a besieging army long ago. The tree is usually grown from slips, carefully planted and tended, and is either male or female. If of the latter sex it must be fertilised from one of the former. Date-palms only bear good fruit in the Saharan zone; the Arabs say that "its head must be in the sun, its feet in the water"; and they need irrigation as well as the heat of the tropic sun.

They are a good investment for a careful father who looks to his children's or grandchildren's future; for, although they will not bear fruit for fifteen or twenty years after planting, they live more than a hundred years. And when dead their roots, trunk and leaves are useful for many purposes. A curious fact about one tapped to give *lakmi* because it does not produce a good crop is that this treatment soon has an excellent effect on the tree and makes it give a plentiful supply of dates.

In the Fezzan, as in other parts of the Sahara, the town-dwellers lead much the same life as town-dwellers elsewhere. But the nomads' existence is very different. They herd camels, sheep and goats about the desert, sending them out day by day in the charge of children to graze on the scanty, scattered plants—each perhaps five yards from the next; for the camels mostly camel-thorn two or three feet high, their roots going down twenty feet in the sand in search of moisture, their small branches studded with thorns one or two inches long—cruel spikes that pierce the lips and tongues of the grazing beasts until blood comes. To find sufficient pasturage for sheep or goats they must wander over five miles in a day. The movements of the nomads are dictated by the necessity of providing grazing for their herds; as soon as the herbage is exhausted in one part of the desert there must be a change to another. This accounts for the apparently aimless wanderings of an encampment over the empty spaces of the waste. The man who wrote

. . . fold their tents like the Arabs
And as silently steal away,

had certainly never witnessed the proceeding. For, as their beasts of burden are nearly always camels, the word "silently"

is decidedly inappropriate for describing the packing up and departure of an encampment, when the snarling brutes raise their voices in indignant protests against loads being placed on their backs.

A nomad's tent is made of long strips of cloth woven from camel hair, or, with a poor man, any old, tattered sacks or rags that he has contrived to steal. If it is intended to remain any length of time on the same spot a back wall of earth or stones is built up and a hedge of dry thorny branches is raised in front to confine the animals at night and keep out intruders. As an additional guard there are always several semi-starving, savage dogs, which are very efficient guards in the dark hours and, even in daylight, are always ready to attack an approaching stranger and tear him to pieces—as I nearly found to my cost in the desert.

The tent contains no furniture other than the camel-bags and saddles and the waterskins hanging on the poles. If one tent has to shelter several persons not belonging to the same family, the men sleep on one side of it, the females on the other. All lie on the ground on mats or blankets if they possess them. Rich men and, in deference to his position, the *shaikh* (pronounced "shake," rhyming with "wake"—I mention this as so often one hears it called "shike" or "sheek") of the tribe have two or more tents, so that married sons have each his own and are not obliged to share their father's.

When a number of relatives or of members of the same tribe camp together their tents are pitched, opening inwards, in a square and the central space used as a fold for their animals. Then the encampment is surrounded by a hedge of thorny branches, materials for which are seldom lacking on the desert, and is called a *duar*.

When morning comes the children drive out the animals to graze after the men, guns in hand, have reconnoitred the neighbourhood to make sure that no robbers or tribal enemies are lurking near, and the women fetch the water from the well near which they have camped, light the fires and begin to prepare the *couscous* for the meal. This is a lengthy process. For the semolina or other flour, which is the base of the dish, is painstakingly rubbed between the hands until it becomes the finest dust. Then it is steamed and—if there be any available—vegetables, or even a little meat, are added to make it palatable. And it certainly can be delicious.

Meat is a very rare luxury to poor Arabs. Only for a wedding or some other feast is a sheep slaughtered; and for the *diffa*, or banquet, it is roasted whole on a spit over a fire lit in a shallow trench. This is not so appetising. I have eaten it in the houses of various *Caid*s in the Sahara, but did not relish it much because,

owing to the method of cooking, some portions are charred, others half-cooked or almost raw. Like an ox roasted whole.

The Arab's family life is truly patriarchal. The father is a despot. His word is law. When he has a meal he eats alone or with the other adult males. The women and children must wait and receive the scraps that the men leave. Then the men, if the camp is not to be moved, sit and smoke in the sun, while the females do all the menial work and weave the cloth for the garments, tents and rugs.

A woman's position among the Arabs is not enviable. A girl must accept the husband selected for her by her father, who sells her to the highest bidder, so that often the youngest maidens are disposed of to rich old debauchees.

The children of nomads receive no teaching except in vice and in crime. For the Arabs are dishonest and immoral. They are verminous and unclean. Venereal disease is almost universal. They are all thieves and would steal the ornaments from the bodies of their dying mothers or wives.

And they do not possess the redeeming virtue of courage often. I have found no one, even Arabs themselves, well acquainted with them say a redeeming word for their race.

In the Fezzan there are many Touareg—the singular is Targui. They are Berbers by descent. They are bold and daring robbers.

They are redoubtable warriors and, although without firearms, long terrorised the desert folk, both townspeople and nomads, and even kept the French at bay for years.

The British have had much acquaintance with Arabs, but few have ever met with Touareg. So these deserve a chapter to themselves.



Photo by the Author

THE COUNTRY OF THE CAVE-DWELLERS
A CAVE

See page 82



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THE SHAIKH OF THE SENUSSI

H.E. SIDI MAHOMMED-EL-IDRIS VISITING SOME OF HIS FOLLOWERS, WHO, CONSPIRACY BY THE ITALIANS TO FIGHT AGAINST THE BRITISH, WERE CAPTURED BY THE LATTER

THE VEILED MEN

WHEN the great Arab invasion in the twelfth century A.D. drove the Berbers into the mountains or the deserts it was responsible for the creation in the Sahara of a race of fierce warriors—bandits who were for centuries to close it to exploration and travel by the fear that they inspired. They were to become and remain the implacable enemies of the Arabs, who named them "Touareg"—in the singular "Targui"—because the first Berbers that they met in the Fezzan called themselves "Targa." But these men term themselves "Imohar," or "Imochar," which means "raiders"; because their one occupation and interest in life was fierce raids to incredible distances to attack and plunder inoffensive tribes. They disdained to cultivate the soil or live in houses. Their habitations were tents, they bred camels of great swiftness and endurance to carry them on astonishingly long distances—animals trained to be as obedient and faithful to their masters as dogs.

In all the long centuries of their existence in the desert they kept themselves apart from other races. Until recent times little was known of them by white men except by rumour, and concerning them she was even more of a lying jade than usual. Their reputation for savage cruelty and courage spread into North Africa and helped to keep explorers and other intruders away from the vast wastes over which the Touareg roam. The French were the first European nation to come in contact with them, as they extended their possessions to the south. The Italians only had to deal with them when Tripolitania became theirs. For the Touareg are spread east and west across the Sahara and do not recognise, or trouble themselves about, the imaginary demarcation lines dividing Italian from French territory.

There are two great divisions of the tribes of the north, the Azdjer and the Ahaggar, and others are found as far south as the country through which the Niger flows near Timbuctoo. It is generally agreed that all Touareg are of Berber origin, descendants of the aborigines of North Africa, who at the time of the great Arab invasion already inhabited the Sahara or retired into it to preserve the independence that their race has always so jealously guarded. Like their kinsmen in the Djurdjura and the Aurès, as well as in Morocco, they embraced Mahommedanism after a time, and, also like them, abjured it often and have never known nor cared much about it.

They have always been bitterly opposed to the Arabs, and waged war on them on every occasion. From the Algerian frontier to the Sudan they swept in swift and destructive passage, leaving a trail of blood, rapine and ruin behind them, destroying kingdoms but creating none, always the same masterless tribes of cruel robbers, ever at war with the world and each other. Merciless, their very name was a menace. Such terror clung to it that the mere sight of one or two would empty a village and send its affrighted inhabitants fleeing without thought of resistance, abandoning all they owned.

And indeed there is something sinister in the appearance of these men, tall, gaunt, draped in sombre garb, stalking with hidden faces over the sand like spectres or passing swiftly on fleet camels.

Their manners and customs, although they may vary somewhat in different factions of the race or in different districts, are in the main similar. Whether of the north or the south, the tribes are divided into two categories, noble or vassal. That is, a more powerful tribe is classed as "noble," and has one or more weaker tribes called *imrad* depending on it and paying it tribute, termed *tiousse*, in dates, grain, milk or booty won in a raid, for protection against aggression by external foes or by the other "noble" tribes. These *imrad* are not serfs in any way and, although they are bound to follow their protectors in war, are not obliged to labour for them. Both categories have their own slaves, generally negroes or half-castes, either born in captivity or prisoners made in raids.

The singular of *imrad* is *amr'id*. In the south there is a third category, serf tribes composed of slaves, in most cases the progeny of Touareg masters and captive women of the Songhay race, which once ruled an empire in the Niger region but was crushed by the Touareg. These serf tribes are called *Elkillan* in the tongue of their masters, *Bellah* in Songhay. They are brown-skinned, smooth-haired and have regular features; the girls are pretty and the men brave and always well to the fore in battle or in the hardly less dangerous pastime of hunting lions and wild elephants in the Niger jungles.

The "noble" tribes consider themselves of a superior clay to the *imrad*; and the men wed in their own caste and would regard a marriage with a "vassal" girl as a misalliance. The offspring of such a union would be *imrad*; for children among the Touareg take the condition of the mother. Thus, if a "noble" woman marries an *amr'id* their children would be "noble"; for this people hold the doctrine that "the womb ennobles," and rank and dignities descend in the female line.

In practice the distinctions between the tribes become somewhat confused, especially in the south. An *imrad* tribe will only

pay the tribute if its supposed protectors are strong enough to enforce it. It may happen that the positions may be reversed by the *imrad* tribe defeating the "noble" one. And often a vassal tribe may have one or more weaker ones depending on it as its *imrad*.

The chieftain of a Targui tribe is termed *amr'ar* and his symbol of authority is the drum *tobol*, which is beaten to call together the members of the tribe and its *imrad* for council or war. Hence the word *tobol*, which is of Arab origin, designates all who obey this chief's rule.

A confederation of "noble" tribes with their dependent *imrad* will choose one such *amr'ar* to lead them all. He is termed *amenokal*, and like every *amr'ar*, his authority depends on his power to enforce it. Theoretically he can fine or wound, but not kill, an offender against his decrees. In each confederacy a certain dominant tribe usually has the right to supply the *amenokal*.

The position of the *amenokal* is partly hereditary, partly elective. He is not succeeded by his son (at least among the Ahaggar) but—in order of inheriting—by his eldest brother, the eldest son of his maternal aunt, and the eldest son of his eldest sister. In practice, on the death of an *amenokal* his family in council decide which member of it is likely to be the best man to replace him. A meeting of the *tobol* is called; and a banquet is given to all who attend it. Sheep are liberally slain to furnish the feast; and the tribesmen, to whom meat is a rare luxury, eat heartily. When repletion has put them in a good humour the name of the selected candidate is mentioned, without being definitely put forward, and his praises sung by a paid claque—in the south this is done by the blacksmiths, who act as heralds and bards. When a favourable atmosphere has been created the name is formally put forward, the *imrad* present having the right to speak first and signify their acceptance of him or the contrary.

If the assembly cannot choose between two candidates there may be a split in the confederacy and a second *tobol* may be created.

The Touareg tribes, when not at war with each other, spent their time raiding the Arabs of the north and the negroes of the Sudan, the peaceable sedentary races of the Air and Damergou. Fighting and robbery are the only fit occupations for men in their opinion. Agriculture, the care of their flocks and the making of tents and garments devolve on the women, the slaves and the half-castes. The cultivation of the soil in the Ahaggar Mountains, where water is found, is left to the despised *Harratine*, mulattos from Tidikelt and Touat. Even the blacksmiths who repair the weapons purchased in the Air are looked down upon, and,

since they live by fire, are supposed to be predestined to suffer eternally by it in hell. They form a separate caste ; and Shaikh Ben Djellas says of them, " They hate and betray God and his Prophet."

The Touareg, although they prefer to live by raiding and levying blackmail on trading caravans passing through their country, do a certain amount of commerce themselves. The men of the Ahaggar bring from the Saharan oases, from Tidikelt and Touat, dates, *chegga* (blue cotton cloth), *mahmoudi* (white cotton cloth), tobacco, snuff, tea and sugar, and from Bilma to the east of them the salt there produced ; and these they carry to the Air and the Damerghou in the southern Sahara and barter for camels, donkeys, *demmane* (sheep covered with hair instead of wool), weapons, saddlery and leather goods.

When moving in a caravan their camels are fastened in threes, one behind the other, as in India, instead of being driven in herds in the Arab way. Men ride only stallion camels and horses, the females being left for the women's use. A Targui's *mehara* (riding camel) is usually white, is speedy and full of endurance, and is trained to dash off at a gallop from standing still and to be absolutely silent, unlike the noisy grumbling of the Arabs' beasts.

The Touareg men are excellent horsemen and camel-riders, and are trained to the use of arms from their earliest youth. Their usual weapons are lance, sword and dagger. The last is cross-hilted, and is worn strapped along the left forearm, point towards the elbow, pommel at the wrist. The sword, swinging at the left side, has also a cross hilt and is straight and double-edged with rounded point. The long spear-shaft is of iron in the case of nobles, of wood with slaves ; but the latter often have it of metal, too.

The shields are of antelope skin, generally of more than one thickness, but of course will not stop a bullet.

Until recently the Touareg had no firearms ; but Turkish and Senussi gun-runners from Tripoli have smuggled to them modern rifles supplied by the Germans in the hope of adding to Italy's embarrassments in the last war.

The endurance of the men of this race seems more than human. Like their camels, and indeed all their domestic animals, they can exist without drinking for two or three days even in the hottest weather, and so can pass over waterless deserts where nothing lives. A handful of coarse, bitter flour, made from the dried and powdered bulbs of the *tazia* or the dried seeds of the gum-tree, will satisfy their hunger. A Targui for the mere love of roaming will leave his tent and family and start off over the gravelly wastes or barren mountains for weeks at a time. When night overtakes him he hobbles his camel, eats his frugal meal,

scoops out a bed for himself if the soil is not too hard and lies down to sleep in it, his weapons beside him, ready to wake at the least hint of danger.

In manners and customs the Touareg differ utterly from Arabs. Unlike all other Mahommedan peoples they are monogamous, and their women are not only free and respected but are almost of more importance than the men. They usually go unveiled, while the sterner sex conceal their faces. A wife's property is entirely her own ; and the succession of dignities, rank and fortunes pass to the children through her, not through her husband ; and if she and he come of different tribes her offspring belong to hers, not to his. She can divorce him at her will—he would earn universal obloquy if he divorced her, no matter what she did. She is never affronted by the presence of a second wife ; but she can have her *cavaliere servente*, a male friend to be her knight, to obey her behests, laud her beauty openly and literally sing her praises in verses of his own composition at the musical gatherings of the tribe. She can receive visits from members of the opposite sex freely ; and it would be unpardonable for the husband to show jealousy. Before the wedding a marriage settlement on her must be made by the bridegroom.

The unmarried woman not only must be consulted in the case of a proposal for her hand, but she can herself propose ; and the man thus honoured would not if he were free dare to refuse. The liberty allowed girls is amazing, especially when their position in other Moslem or African races is considered. Chastity is not expected of them ; and they can have as many amours as they desire before settling down to matrimony with husbands fully aware of their past.

There is a surprising amount of freedom between the sexes. Among uncivilised peoples as a rule there is little or no social intercourse allowed between men and women, especially if young and unwed. But the Touareg exceed most European races in this respect. They are passionately fond of " musical evenings," called *ahal* ; and whenever there are a few men and women in an encampment they gather outside the tents after sundown, the ladies play the *amz'ad*, a single-stringed violin made of half a calabash rind with a string stretched across it, and a long handle. The string and the cord of the bow are of horsehair.

The singing is generally left to the men, who chant ballads of their own composition, extolling the beauty of their mistresses, satirising their enemies and vaunting their own prowess in war.

After the singing, games of forfeits are played ; for this amusement of civilised children is of great antiquity and known in the Far East.

The women elect a sultana, the men a sultan ; and the royal pair decide the penalties to be inflicted on the losers of the trial of wit, which is the form that the games take.

All through the evening the lovers pay open and unrestrained court ; and the girls are proud to flaunt their conquest before the eyes of everyone. They sit on their adorers' knees in sight of all and kiss the chosen swains—on their noses ! For as the Targui man must not expose his whole face in public he lowers his veil below his nostrils and presents his nasal organ to the lips of his *inamorata*. The *ahal* often lasts through the night, and gives ample opportunity for intrigues—opportunities of which the married women as well as the girls avail themselves freely. All this will seem incredible to anyone acquainted with other African or Oriental uncivilised races, and, above all, Moslems.

The freedom conceded to a Targui woman is unique. Her position is indeed enviable. She does not need to work ; for, no matter how poor she may be, she has always at least one negress slave to cook and undertake the menial labour for her. If married, her property is her own absolutely. She can divorce her husband by the simple process of leaving him. If she has an intrigue with a negro slave from which a black baby results no suspicion is aroused ; as everyone will accept the standard explanation that some evil wizard has cast a spell on her and caused the poor infant to resemble the despised negro race.

Indeed, if an unmarried woman becomes a mother it is politely assumed that the child's father is a spiritual being. It is no wonder that with the liberty allowed them the Touareg girls do not pine if they fail to find husbands.

For the men are not in a hurry to marry, since the necessity of making a settlement on the bride and of providing for the upkeep of the *ménage*—as the wife need contribute nothing to it, no matter how rich she is—makes the young man shy of embarking on matrimony. And he has many consolations ; for not only are intrigues with girls and married women of his own race possible, but he can choose concubines from his negress slaves ; or a widow or a divorced woman, enriched by her marriage settlement, which she retains, may propose to him.

So it follows that among the Touareg the young men marry older women ; while it is generally only elderly men who have accumulated wealth who can afford to espouse the young and attractive girls.

When a Targui decides to marry and has fixed on the lady he sends to her parents an embassy of two *marabouts* or *tolbas* with a couple of influential men to solicit her hand. The request is laid before her whole family ; for even the most distant relatives

both in point of blood and distance must be consulted. And the girl's consent has to be obtained ; because, if her father marries her off against her will, she has only to refuse herself to her husband and he will arrange a divorce and let her return to her kindred.

When the wedding day is fixed the guests assemble at the encampment of the bride's family, the women on camels or donkeys and carrying their drums and one-stringed violins, the men in gala costume with their weapons and mounted on their best *mehara*. An hour after noon the male guests indulge in a *fantasia*—a sort of mounted sports, consisting chiefly of discharging firearms from the saddle at a mad gallop, while the ladies urge them on by song and music. The bridegroom is present, seated on his camel beside a friend, but does not take part ; while the bride is hidden in the tent of some female relative on the maternal side and carefully avoids looking at the spectacle, as her glance would bring bad luck on some rider or other and cause an accident.

The *fantasia* continues to sunset, when a deputation of four men representing the husband-to-be waits on the girl's father—or, if she be a widow or divorced woman, on the bride herself—and asks that someone be chosen to act for her, nominating at the same time a person to act for the man. These two nominees then join them ; and the contract of marriage is settled and the dowry arranged. This the husband provides ; for a noble it is seven camels, for an *amr'id* a camel or some sheep or goats, according to his means. He only hands over a part at the time and owes the rest. Beasts are slain for the marriage feast and prayers are said to call down the blessing of Allah on the happy pair.

Then the female relations and guests gather, provide music and prepare the nuptial couch, which is of sand or earth on which a cloth is spread. Then they proceed to erect a tent over it ; but the men rush on them, seize the tent, raise it three times for luck before pitching it, and lead the bridegroom to it.

The women escort the bride towards the entrance ; but before she reaches it a male cousin on the mother's side pretends to hold her back, crying :

“ I shall not let thee go from us until I have received a gift of sandals.”

A pair of sandals or some other present is given him and he releases her.

Then the women sing in chorus :

“ We are a-hungered !
We are naked !
We are afoot ! ”

And the men reply :

“ Ye shall be fed !
Ye shall be clothed !
Ye shall be mounted ! ”

Then the bride and the women chant a verse to the husband, intimating that they expect him to behave like a strong and bold man and not as a child. After which admonition the bride goes into the tent to him ; and they are left alone while the guests retire and feast.

The honeymoon consists of the new-married pair remaining in their tent for seven days, fed by the wife's family and cheered by frequent visits from their friends.

For a year afterwards they remain near the bride's parents to give her time to get used to parting from them.

Divorce is a much simpler proceeding than the marriage ; and incompatibility of temperament is the most general cause. For usually it is the wife who seeks it, since a husband who gets rid of his spouse must pay her the balance of the marriage settlement. And public opinion is against him if he divorce her, even though he detects her in adultery. “ Women's Rights ” need no advocate among the Touareg.

This race has a superstitious dread of even the mention of death. When a Targui dies a *marabout* washes his corpse in warm water according to Mahommedan rites and sews it up in a clean white cloth. For his services he is rewarded with a cow and the deceased's clothes. The body is placed on its right side facing towards Mecca in a shallow grave, on which branches are heaped to prevent jackals and hyenas scratching it up again ; and tombstones are put at the head and foot. Then the grave is surrounded by one or two rectangles or ovals marked out in stones and, when the prayers have been said, the mourners leave it and go to the funeral feast ; after which camp is struck and all quit the spot where death took place, for they consider that it must be unlucky.

Touareg turn aside if they come upon a tomb, and they never mention the name of a deceased person.

They are exceedingly superstitious and believe firmly in the evil eye, sorcerers, vampires, ghosts and *djinn*s. According to them sorcerers, called *akiriko*, are either male or female, and are invariably vampires who can suck blood without the necessity of going near the victim. It is enough to breathe in air while thinking of him or her, and the poor wretch's blood passes invisibly into the *akiriko*'s body to fatten him, while the victim grows weak for loss of it and will die unless the sorcerer relents. The children of the *akiriko* inherit their parents' magical powers.

These vampires are known by their habit of persistently licking

their lips in the presence of human beings or horses, for they also suck the blood of the latter. When discovered they are punished by the confiscation of their possessions and by exile.

More terrible and less easily baffled are the *djinns*. These spirits, for the most part evil, live in big cities in the interior of the earth and among certain isolated mountains called Idinen on the caravan route from Ghadames to Ghat. They travel much, so they are frequently met with on the roads, but are usually invisible. They are in the habit of entering tents and joining in mortals' meals, and should any luckless wight try to sit on the mat, eat from the dish or drink from the cup, that the unseen and uninvited guest is using, he will die on the spot, unless, indeed, he has been careful to guard against evil by the pious utterance "Bismillah!"

Sudden deaths from apoplexy, heart failure or similar causes are thus accounted for. Accidents, such as a fall from a horse or camel, are attributed to some *djinn's* anger.

If a Targui hears at night any regular cadenced noise like the blows of a blacksmith's hammer he promptly flees in the opposite direction, for *djinns* often set up anvils to forge or sharpen their arms and generally do so near encampments. Any mortal who blunders on them then dies.

There are male and female *djinns*. They marry and have children. Sometimes they carry off human babies, if the parents have not fulfilled certain prescribed rites, and replace them by their own offspring.

As the gods and goddesses of old fell in love with mortals, so do the *djinns*, male and female, descend upon, in their slumbers, the men or women whom they honour with their affections.

Some of the *djinns* are the spirits of long-dead Touareg and they will foretell the future to human beings. So, often, women, dressed in their best and wearing all their jewellery, will pass the night lying on an ancient tomb, hoping that in their dreams knowledge will be granted them as to when their absent men will return. Occasionally one of them is found in the morning dead—strangled by the *djinn*, it is said. But as her jewellery has disappeared a more feasible explanation is easy to find.

The Touareg are nominally Mahommedans, but hardly practising ones. They have no mosques and never make the pilgrimage to Mecca. They regard their *marabouts* with a certain respect, as long as these priests do not worry them about religion. But indeed the holy men know little about the faith that they profess. They have not much instruction, are acquainted with a few texts of the Koran, which they make use of freely, and perhaps write a little Arabic. They receive no *zekat*, or tithe, from their flocks but are paid for marriages, circumcisions, and burials or for writing letters and numbering herds.

The *marabouts* belong to special tribes, such as the Kel es Souk and the Segokhanes, originally from the destroyed town of Souk, and the Cherfig, descended from men of Marrakesh in the far-distant days when the Sultan of the kingdom of Morocco—then only the region about the city of Marrakesh—conquered Timbuctoo.

As the clergy are so ignorant it is natural that the laity are more so. The women are more educated than the men and many of them know something of the *tifinar*, the written characters of the Targui language—characters which are shaped like circles, squares, dots, crosses and parallel lines—which is now rarely employed.

Every girl is taught to play the *amz'ad*, the single-stringed violin, as skill with it will add to her popularity in the *ahal*—the musical At Homes where the courting is done. If she is of wealthy parentage she will be crammed from earliest youth with fattening food like a Strasbourg goose, for fatness is considered beautiful by the men.

In dress, as in almost everything else, the Touareg differ from the Arabs. The garments of the men, made of dark blue, almost black, cotton, consist of a sleeveless inner gown—called *takarbast* by the Ahaggar—open at the sides, an outer one with wide sleeves, the *takammist*, and loose trousers gathered in at the ankles. The characteristic veil, the *tiedjelmoust*, is a long strip of blue cotton, one end of which is placed on top of the head, the rest brought down to and across the lower part of the face, then up and across the brow, leaving the eyes visible, then wound round the skull. Their bare feet are thrust into broad, flat sandals. Everywhere about them they hang little leather bags or boxes containing amulets—scraps of paper with a text from the Koran scrawled on it by a *marabout*, an inch or two of giraffe skin, a lion's claw or some other similar charm.

The women wear sleeved shirts or blouses, a *haik* and a skirt, and the *ikerhi*, a black veil which is never drawn across the face, except in the presence of some elderly and important relative as a mark of respect. In summer they put on large hats to shade them from the sun. They load themselves with ornaments—bracelets of silver, glass or horn, rings and large hooped ear-rings—and, like the men, wear many amulets.

The reason of the men being veiled is lost in antiquity. The Arabs on their first introduction to the Touareg found them thus masking their faces and called them *Ahl-el-Litham*, the Veiled People. The Touareg say themselves that their ancestors adopted this fashion because the Prophet veiled his face before entering Mecca after its capture. But the truth probably is that the habit originated in these desert-riders' desire to protect their eyes from the glare of the sun and their mouths and nostrils from the sand.

To-day a Targui thinks it shameful to expose his mouth to view. When entering an encampment of strangers he shrouds his eyes and in assemblies and council-meetings his whole face.

The Touareg, both noble and *imrad*, possess slaves, mostly negroes either born in captivity or captured in raids. The males herd the flocks and attend their masters in war and in the chase. The females do the heavy work indoors and out, gather the shell and seed-pods of wild plants to make flour for *couscous*, weave mats, tan and dye sheepskins, make garments, fetch water from the wells and make cheese and butter.

The fog of mystery that for so long shrouded this strange race was lifted by the French in the Algerian Sahara first of all. French officers lead their camelry through the country and impose peace on it. Fortified posts dot it. Even as far back as 1887 warriors of the Taitoq clans raiding tribes under French protection and captured were brought to Algiers—some even to Paris. Veiled chieftains of the Ahaggar met a President of France in the Algerian capital, have driven behind him in stately procession, have accompanied him on warships in the bay, have seen and heard the guns on battleship and cruiser salute him, have been stared at by tens of thousands of white folk in the streets, and watched the rank, beauty and fashion of Algiers dance one-step and tango in the Summer Palace—and gone back again by train, automobile and camel on the long journey to the dark ravines of the Hoggar Mountains and the grim deserts of their motherland. The fierce eyes have gazed intently from the shrouded faces at modern civilisation—what did the brains behind them think of it ?

THE SENUSSI

NOT until 1900 was the name "Senussi" known to any but a few in Europe. But in that year the French had occasion to learn what it was and what it stood for, because, in seeking to extend their territory in Central Africa, they tried to gain possession of Khanem and found themselves in conflict with the Senussi, who were opposed to any Christian Power attempting to conquer Moslem countries. In a little campaign which lasted two years the French were victorious, but even then few of the people in Europe, or even in France itself, could have said what the Senussi were.

But when in 1911 Italy went to war with Turkey and invaded Libya, the little-known Senussi came very much into the limelight, for not only did they join with the Turks in resisting the invaders, but when Constantinople acknowledged defeat and made peace the Senussi continued to fight. And when, in 1915, Italy declared war on Austria and so was matched against Turkey again, the Senussi, with some slight help from the Germans and Turks, kept the Italians penned inside the walls of Tripoli and forced them to abandon any pretence of rule over the rest of Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, and meanwhile controlled Libya themselves.

Then, in 1915, urged on and heavily bribed by Germany, they invaded Egypt and for the first time came up against the British troops. And at last the English people took notice of them and asked, "Who *are* the Senussi?"

The unexpected answer was that they are not a race or a tribe, but members of a Mahommedan religious confraternity composed of many nationalities with their headquarters in a Libyan oasis, whence they sent out missionaries and commercial travellers into Central Africa to win proselytes and get trade. They are strongly anti-Christian and opposed to Moslem countries being ruled by non-Moslems.

The Prophet ordered his followers to make war unceasingly on all infidels, that is, on all who do not follow his teaching. He taught them that a *Djehad*, or Holy War, will always exist as long as one unbeliever lives. He told them that it was his mission to fight until everyone acknowledged that "God is God and Mahommed is His prophet." He said that the world is divided into the "Dar-ul-Islam," which means "The House of Islam," *i.e.* the countries of the Believers, and the "Dar-ul-Harg," the "House of War," which is the lands of the unbelievers. "The House of War" is

God's. "He gives it to you. Fight until you conquer it. Fight the infidels until you exterminate them. Make war on the peoples of the Bible [*i.e.* the Christians and the Jews, who believe in it]. When you meet the infidels, kill them, slaughter them. Slay them wherever you find them!"

But he permitted his followers to cease to carry on this perpetual war when they were not strong enough to wage it, on condition that they would continue it as soon as they could. Thus they could live in a country ruled by non-Moslems until they were able to rebel against and overthrow their infidel rulers. This naturally makes them dangerous subjects.

Now the average Moslem may be a peaceable individual, content to follow his religion by doing what it ordains he should do, that is, to pray, to fast, to give alms, to make a pilgrimage to Mecca if possible and to pay his legal dues to the State. But there is no certainty that, if a Holy War is proclaimed, he will not throw away all that he has in order to take part in it. It does not matter against whom he is called on to fight. All he knows or cares about is that it is a Holy War, that his soul is for ever lost if he does not join in it.

Mahommedanism is more than a creed. It is a bond of political union. What affects a Moslem of North Africa is the concern of an Indian Mussulman, what touches a Syrian Mahommedan touches a Moslem of Anatolia, so that a *Djehad* in Asia may set Moslem Africa aflame.

In Mahommedan countries there exist a number of religious fraternities which began perhaps as charitable associations and in many cases have developed into secret societies with political leanings, but always with a Moslem bias.

None of them are monastic orders; most of the members are generally individuals living out in the world, scattered about through different countries, men who are merchants, camel-drivers, shopkeepers, carters, waiters in European-run hotels, soldiers or civilians, persons of every grade and class. Some of these fraternities, however, have established *zaouias*, which are really convents in which a number of the adherents live, work and study together. But each of these confraternities has a leader or head called the *Shaikh* and a number of subordinates termed *Mokaddems*, whose duty it is to direct the consciences of, and pass on instructions to, the rank and file, known as *khouans*, and, as well as this, to collect arms. Each association has, as its password or sign of recognition for its members, a special formula of prayer called the *Dikr*, which is given out by the *Shaikh* to the *Mokaddems*, who teach it to the brothers. In similar fashion all other directions are passed on to the *khouans*; and thus would come to them the orders for a Holy War to begin against all non-Moslems.

There are many of these brotherhoods. The Khadrya, known

in Morocco as Djilala, is a wealthy order spread throughout all Mahommedan countries. The members are zealous propagators of the Moslem faith and bitter opponents of the domination of Mahommedan lands by Christian governments. Their influence extends along the west coast of Africa from Senegal to the mouth of the Niger. Equally antagonistic to Christian rulers are the Chadelya, from whom are derived the Madanya, the Deragaoua and the Yussefya. These have separate headquarters in Cairo, but all obey the same Head, who is supposed to be hidden in that city.

There are also the Aissaoua, the only order of which European tourists in North Africa, chiefly in Algeria, ever see anything, because some of its members give public displays of their supposedly miraculous powers of eating venomous snakes and scorpions, broken glass, thorny plants and other such unappetising comestibles. They are supposedly endowed with this faculty by their founder, Sidi Mahommed-ben-Aissa, who once when preaching to a vast crowd outside the city of Meknès in Morocco was appealed to by one of his hearers for food. Others echoed the cry, and the Sidi is reputed to have said, "Eat! Eat what you find under the stones around you!" And his hearers accordingly raised the stones and devoured the poisonous snakes and the scorpions sheltering under them—then finished their meal by eating the stones as well! Since that day all his disciples can do the same.

Europeans know little or nothing of the religious side of any of these fraternities, but many are now well acquainted with the Senussi to-day, by repute at least. They are an association, like the others, which was founded by a holy man named Mahommed-ben - Si - Ali - ben - Snoussi - el - Khembi - el - Hassani - el - Edrissi-el-Midjahiri, who was born at the very end of the eighteenth century or the very beginning of the nineteenth century at the Hillil, near Mostanagem, in what is now Algeria. From his childhood religion called him, and when he grew up he added the name Snoussi or Senussi, which had belonged to a saint who is buried in Tlemçen, an ancient city in the north-west of Algeria. It is on the route from the sea to Oujda, which is on the borders of Morocco. It was probably by this road that he entered Morocco and passed through the mountains to Fez, the northern capital of the country. There he joined one of its famous *medersa* or universities, in order to study theology. After some years here he was inspired by missionary zeal and set out to travel through the southern deserts of Algeria and in Tunisia and Tripolitania to preach the faith of the Prophet and endeavour to rid it of the errors that had crept into it. He made many converts and gained adherents among the simple and ignorant desert folk who flocked to hear him preach.

But when he went on to Cairo he was not so successful among its rich and educated citizens, who regarded him as a revolutionary with his appeals for self-denial and abstemiousness. He also incurred the disapproval and censure of the great authority on theology, the Ulema of the University, who branded him as unorthodox, if not schismatic. In despair the young missionary took refuge in the Holy City of Mecca, which was the loadstone of every pious Moslem then, as it is to-day.

There he joined the confraternity of the Khadrites, a Moroccan order, of which the Head was Mohammed Idris-el-Fassi, who gladly welcomed the young apostle of Islam and held him in favour. When El Fassi died the society split into two branches and El Senussi was elected to head one of them.

But again he fell out with the religious authorities. It was, as in Cairo, a case of a zealous young reformer and an old conservative leader who considered him too radical in his attempt to purify the faith. So El Senussi judged it advisable to leave Mecca and settle in Cyrenaica, then under Turkish rule, where he founded a *zaouia* near Derna. But the authorities were suspicious of him on account of the great increase in the number of his adherents; so he moved again and went to settle in Jaghub, a small oasis thirty miles north-west of Siwa, where the mysterious temple of Jupiter Ammon had stood and Alexander the Great went to be declared by its priests to be the son of Jupiter.

Here, about 1860, the first El Senussi died and was buried. He was succeeded by his younger son, El Mahdi, whom he had chosen to follow him, the older son acquiescing. Under this second El Senussi the confraternity rapidly increased its membership, and its *zaouias* were to be found from Fez to Damascus, from Stamboul to India. It spread and flourished particularly in the eastern Sahara and in Central Sudan. Its Shaikh, El Mahdi, became very powerful, almost like a territorial monarch from the west frontier of Egypt to Darfur, Wadai and Bornu to the south, to Bilma and Murzuk to the west and, in the north to the coast of Tripolitania. The Senussi occupied and cultivated the Libyan oases, encouraged trade with Tripoli and Benghazi, dug wells along the trade routes everywhere and kept order among the savage Bedawi, or Bedouins of the desert. However, as the eastern Sahara is thinly peopled and desolate, his influence in the Central Sudan was much more valuable to El Mahdi. His father had a great friend in the Sultan of Wadai, then a strong Moslem kingdom, lying near Lake Chad.

The second Shaikh El Senussi had been named *Mahdi* by his father. This in Arabic signifies "one who is rightly guided." The Prophet had declared that one of his descendants would bring to the world justice and rightfulness, and he would bear the name of El Mahdi. Consequently from time to time imposters

have appeared, each of them claiming to be this man and demanding reverence and obedience.

This El Senussi did not declare himself to be this heaven-sent benefactor to the human race ; but when, in 1881, a man from Dongola named Mahommed Abdullah announced that *he* was the true Mahdi, started his rebellion against the Khedive and committed frightful atrocities, El Senussi was disgusted and refused to join him.

With his followers the Senussi Shaikh was now established in Jaghub ; but the spread of his influence and authority disturbed the Turkish Government. They sent the Pasha of Benghazi to this oasis to investigate how matters stood and warn El Mahdi, who thought it better to move somewhere else. So he shifted his headquarters to a less accessible oasis called Kufara.

His father's friend of Mecca days, the Sultan of Wadai, the Moslem state near Lake Chad, where he had gained many adherents, had died ; but his successors had kept up the connection with the Senussi. Now El Mahdi became concerned with the movements of the French in Central Africa, for they seemed to be closing in on Wadai. Failing to rouse the peoples of the many little Mahommedan kingdoms in that region to a sense of their danger, El Mahdi went to war with the European aggressors himself, which seemed an audacious undertaking for the leader of a religious association with no territorial possessions or trained army thus to challenge the military might of the French Empire. This was in 1900, but not until 1902 was he defeated and Wadai surrendered to the enemy. This was such a blow to El Mahdi that it killed him. But his death did not end hostilities ; for his nephew, Ahmed-el-Sherif, who succeeded him, carried on the struggle up to 1911. Then, finding it hopeless, he retired to Kufara.

He had always maintained friendly relations with the British in Egypt and with the Khedive, in whose territories the number of fresh recruits to the Senussi was increasing. In Alexandria, Mahommed-el-Idris, the eldest son of the late El Mahdi, was living, regarded as a notable personage. Now, undeterred by his failure against the French, the new El Senussi, Ahmed-el-Sherif, in 1911 joined the Turks in their war with the Italians when they invaded Libya ; and, even after the withdrawal of his Turkish allies from the fight, he carried on the war single-handed and nearly drove the invaders out of the country. The only footholds they retained were the ports of Tripoli and Homs.

In the second year of the Great War of 1914-18 a number of Turkish officers and Arabic-speaking Germans managed to get into Cyrenaica and laid siege to the El Senussi Sidi Ahmed, endeavouring by bribes, flattery and promises to induce him to invade Egypt and attack the British there. At first he resisted

them ; and the Allied leaders in Cairo, learning of these intrigues, sent his cousin, Mahommed-el-Idris, from Alexandria to buy him over the Germans' heads ; but the latter's bids were higher and he agreed to do as they wished.

So at the end of 1915 he gathered his followers together and invaded the Nile Delta by way of the coastal region and, early in 1916, also by the well-watered route along the string of oases which stretch from Siwa to the Nile at Abydos, near the ancient Thebes. These oases were : Biharia, which had a population of 6000 ; Farafra, with only 633 inhabitants ; Dakla, with 1700 ; and Kharga, with 8000. He personally led the force proceeding on this route. He had confided the command of the other, advancing along the coast, to an Arab from Bagdad named Jafar Pasha.

So once again this religious fraternity went to war with European Powers, for Sidi Ahmed was challenging, not the British Empire alone, but all its allies. He had only five thousand of his own followers, a few Turkish soldiers and some desert irregulars ; and with this little force he did not hesitate to attack such formidable enemies. But for the time being these odds did not seem so disproportionate ; because Egypt had been drained of British troops for the Gallipoli campaign ; and Major-General Wallace had the greatest difficulty in collecting enough men to oppose the Senussi's two advances. To make matters worse the Sultan of Darfur rebelled and made common cause with Shaikh Sidi Ahmed. He planned to invade Kordofan and march on Khartoum. The greatest danger of all was of a rising among the desert tribes of Bedouins in Western Egypt and the Nile Valley and possibly a Holy War due to the religious influence of the Shaikh el Senussi.

British outposts at Sollum and the frontier of Cyrenaica were withdrawn and Mersa Matruh—two names destined to come into greater prominence in the Eighth Army's campaign against the Italians and Germans from 1939 to 1942—was made the advanced position of the defenders on the coast route. Here Major-General Wallace had a small force of English Yeomanry and Territorials, Australians and New Zealanders, Indians and Egyptians. With this he struck on Christmas Day 1915 and defeated the Senussi, but the coming of the rainy season and the lack of reinforcements prevented the success from being followed up. But on 26th February 1916 the British, now under Major-General Peyton, attacked again on the road to Sollum. Two South African battalions stormed the invaders' position, the Dorsetshire Yeomanry charged through the enemy and captured their leader, Jafar Pasha, the Bagdadi Arab.

The routed Senussi retreated into Cyrenaica, while Shaikh Sidi Ahmed remained in the oases until chased out by a British camel corps. He retired to Siwa, but was finally attacked by a

flying column of British armoured cars and completely defeated. In the meantime his ally, the Sultan of Darfur, had been routed in May 1916 and killed in the November of that year. In 1917 and 1918 Turkish and German influence with the Senussi declined and Sidi Ahmed was so discredited by his many reverses that he fled from Africa and took refuge in Constantinople. He was succeeded by his cousin from Alexandria, Sidi Mahommed-el-Idris, who concluded agreements with Britain and Italy, recognising the sovereignty of the latter Power. In return he was given authority over the oases of Kufara, Jaghub and several others.

But after the coming of the Governor Guiseppe Volpi to Tripoli relations became strained between the new El Senussi and the Italians. The latter declared that Mahommed-el-Idris was linking himself with the rebels still waging war on them, and early in 1923 Rome announced that it considered their agreement with him null and void. But the El Senussi, who was of a peaceful disposition and looked upon himself as a spiritual rather than a temporal ruler, had already returned to Egypt.

The members of his order and the other inhabitants of the deserts of Tripolitania still opposed the Italians, even after the latter concluded treaties with the Egyptian Government which transferred Jaghub to Italian sovereignty and so altered the frontier line that Kufara also became Italian. In 1927, 1928 and 1929 Rome pressed the campaign against its rebellious subjects with such vigour that they were finally crushed. Terrible tales have been told of the cruel reprisals they took for the defiance of their authority, of Senussi chiefs and other prominent men being hurled alive from aeroplanes flying at a great height. They scoured the Fezzan with columns of motorised troops and completely crushed all opposition. The remnants of the Senussi were so thoroughly cowed that they did not resist when the Italians conscripted them, and many of them have been forced to fight against the Allies in the Libyan campaign. Those who have been taken prisoner by the British certainly show no regret at having to leave the service of the Italians and are generally ready to join the forces of their captors. And their Shaikh, El Senussi Sidi Mahommed-el-Idris, has visited them in their captivity and, as he is pro-Allies himself, is favourable to this transfer of allegiance.

The Senussi are not a horde of ignorant, fanatical desert-dwellers living by looting and highway robbery and thirsting for the blood of all non-Moslems. Many of their members are educated, well-to-do men, and Sidi Mahommed-el-Idris himself is a sincere, high-minded person who in his years of residence in Egypt and, later, in his unhappy dealings with the Italians, to visit whose king in Italy he was taken in state in a warship specially placed at his disposal, has learned much of the world and of men.

The traveller Mons. E. F. Gautier, a professor of Algiers Uni-

versity, says of the Senussi, "They are a commercial people, cultured, refined and intellectual—all of which in the Orient seems to be quite compatible with a desperate religious fanaticism. . . . Their influence is already spreading through Borku and even into the Tibesti, for they push even further in pursuit of their commerce, and as they go they build their mosques, acquiring proselytes along with their customers."

They are ascetics, refrain from alcohol and tobacco, abjure the use of gold, jewels and all luxury, and avoid, as much as possible, intercourse with Jews, Christians and infidels. They are interested in trade and do much to promote it by opening wells and building their *zaouias* near the most important watering-places on caravan routes and in them entertaining the journeying merchants. Indeed, every passing traveller can claim three days' free lodging and food, and does not go away without being instructed in the teaching and doctrines of his hosts.

Of course the bulk of the members are recruited from uneducated men of many races and nationalities, a large number from negro and negroid peoples. For the association is cosmopolitan and largely composed of individuals whose religious feelings have been aroused by the appeal of a simple faith without hair-splitting about the doctrines. It is easy to understand why the Senussi missionaries have always had more success with the simple folk of the desert than with the more worldly inhabitants of the towns. It is easy to give up the things that you have never had, so the Bedouin camel-driver or the black cultivator of the Sudan is readier to agree with the Senussi appeal to abandon luxury and rich living than the wealthy citizen of Cairo, likelier to be content with the simple doctrines that stick closely to the teaching of the Prophet than would be the dabbler in theological disputes and discussions of the mosques and universities of a metropolis.

What is the numerical strength of the Senussi? Various European travellers who from time to time have contacted them have attempted to estimate their membership. They could only go by what their hosts have told them. As the associates are spread over Algeria, Libya, Egypt, the Sudan, Central Africa and Arabia, it would be almost impossible to check their number; the estimate of a million and a half given by one traveller may be an exaggeration, or it may not. Who can tell? But when the Senussi went to war with European nations they never put into the field more than a few thousand. Of course they could not assemble their scattered members.

But this very paucity in numbers of its combatants makes their achievements all the more remarkable. It is difficult to realise that in the twentieth century a religious confraternity did not hesitate to challenge the military might of the French Republic, nearly succeeded in sweeping the Italians out of Libya and had the

audacity to defy the British Empire and its Allies in the First Great War. Now they are its friends, and their friendship is valuable to a great Mahommedan-ruling Power, such as England is, with seventy million or more Moslem subjects in India alone. The bond of religious union between the followers of the Prophet everywhere is very strong.

For the moment the story of the Senussi stops. What will its next chapter be ?

.

THE FUTURE OF TRIPOLITANIA

WHAT is to be the future of Tripolitania—and this means of Cyrenaica, the other province of Libya, too? Its situation is extraordinary. Here is a country, of which the history goes back to perhaps sixteen centuries before the coming of Christ, and yet has no nation. It has no owner, native or foreign. No one has a just claim to it. The Italians gained possession of it by their usual gangster methods of smash and grab, but, like most who utilise those methods, they have ended by running away. A little over thirty years ago they demanded it from its then possessors, the Turks. They had no shadow of right to it. They wanted it and thought that they could get it—that was sufficient right.

Turkey was weak, therefore they could safely demand it. France had taken Tunisia, to which the Italians had thought themselves entitled because of the many Italian subjects who had settled there. France, however, was then too strong to be fought for it. Yet Italy must put herself on the same level as other European nations; she must become a great Colonial Power. She must expand; she needed living-room for her increasing population. She had already tried for it in Abyssinia with disastrous results. Adowa was an unpleasant memory. Because of her defeat there she had lost face; she had been shamed in the eyes of the world. Her prestige had suffered greatly.

Well, here was the opportunity to change all that. The possession of Libya would do it. Of course it was mostly worthless desert, but what of that? And the legend lived that it had been the granary of the old Roman Empire; why could it not be the same for the new one? To get it would be an easy task. Turkey was weakened by the Balkan wars; and, if small nations like Bulgaria and Serbia could defeat her, surely it would not be difficult for modern Italy. The Turkish garrison in North Africa was small, ill-trained, ill-equipped. They could not be reinforced by land, as neutral countries like Egypt intervened, nor by sea, since Turkey had no vessels to transport troops and no warships to protect them if she had against the powerful Italian Fleet. If Rome was once firmly established in Libya perhaps some turn of Fortune's wheel might make the conquest of Egypt and the Suez Canal possible for her. And Tunisia, too; at the moment the French were strong, but they were a decadent nation with a rapidly declining birthrate, while that of Italy was rising. Why hesitate,

then ? *Avanti, Savoia !* And war on Turkey and an attack on Libya were launched.

At the start everything went according to plan. Turkish opposition to the landing was smashed. Italian sailors and soldiers stood on Libyan soil. Victory was assured. There was unexpected opposition from the natives ; and the members of some Moslem religious Order called the Senussi joined the Turkish troops. But, of course, they could be of little military value, ill-equipped and untrained as they were. Soon Turkey gave up the struggle and made peace. " Victory is ours ! " again cried Rome.

But affairs did not go so well later. The despised Senussi continued the war and nearly drove the Italians into the sea. But time was on the side of the European Power. Eventually she was bound to win. And she did.

After long years of a harassing guerilla struggle all Libya from the sea to the Sahara was in her hands. Now her position must be strengthened. So, as the chief opposition had come from the desert zone, the Fezzan was half depopulated. But Italy must be firmly established by introducing more of her citizens into Libya. There were no industrial possibilities in it, so agriculture must be the key to success. Again came the mention of " the granary of Rome." Why not transfer hard-working Italian and Sicilian peasants from the poor soil on which they toiled to make a living for themselves and their families to the treasure-land that the new possession across the Mediterranean could be made. The Fascist bureaucrats in Rome—few of whom had any practical acquaintance with agriculture, having been journalists, clerks and students mostly—thought the plan perfection when the Duce proposed to send a hundred thousand families to Libya. They backed it with millions of *lire* from the nation's purse.

Perhaps thirty-two thousand families did go, chiefly to Tripolitania, as only the western part of Cyrenaica was suitable for cultivation. Certainly the arrangements made ahead of their coming were good. Village sites were chosen, the land divided up, houses were built for the incoming tenants, all at Government expense. Loans were granted to help them at the beginning.

Then the immigrants arrived ; and with the ready acceptance of their fate by Italian peasants they settled down to work. Success was assured, cried the officials—Libya will be the brightest jewel in the King-Emperor's crown ! All that was needed was Peace.

But that was denied by the Dictator's vaulting ambition. He gave Libya war instead. And as Italy's flag fluttered down over Libya the new Roman Empire sank with it.

But it has left in Tripolitania a legacy of puzzle and doubt to those who will have to plan Libya's future when the war is ended—those thirty thousand farmers. What is to become of them ? In

Abyssinia it may be a simple matter to dispose of the Italian new settlers ; they had to go back to their own country because the land allotted to them belonged to the Abyssinians, who had been unjustly deprived of it to hand it over to the newcomers. As a rule this has not been the case in Tripolitania, although there are exceptions, because in most parts the ground had not been cultivated by anyone before the new colonists arrived. Italian peasants have little sympathy with Fascism, which is a city product, so they may be content to stay where they are and work for themselves and their children under a foreign flag, as millions of them have done for years in North and South America.

Will the future Peace Council agree to this ? For these colonists will for a long time represent a possible danger. Although the peasants, as I have said, are not in favour of Fascists, nevertheless they are still Italians and, like all of their race who live abroad, never forget the land of their birth. See how many of them, when they have made money in the United States or in the Argentine, return to their native villages and settle there contentedly. In a small town in the Apennines I have met such a man who had lived in North America for thirty years without learning to speak English, and had just come back to buy a farm and spend his remaining years in his own country.

So these colonists will always hanker after Italy—and Italy is very near. Who can say whether or no, when the first memories of this war have passed away, their eyes and their hearts may not turn again to their native land and the feeling of nationality awake again and make them ready to listen to subversive propaganda from underground agitators.

But Libya must never again be allowed to return to a nation that seized it by force most unjustly in the first place and in the thirty years of its occupation has never thought of the interests of its inhabitants, but ruled only for its own benefit. As it has been so ready to succumb to the wiles of a scheming dictator and his small but virulent political party, what guarantee have we that the same may not happen again and Libya may not be the spark that will set the world on fire once more. No ; Italy has no rightful claim to the North African country, and never had.

Her predecessor in its possession was Turkey ; but she never had any better title to it. And the new Turkish nation does not display any desire for overseas colonial territory. That rules out Turkey.

To-day the Union Jack flies over Tripolitania, and Britain might urge the right of conquest ; but she has already declared that she seeks no fresh territorial gains from this war. She advocates the right of little nations to rule themselves.

France, too, might put in her claim to the Fezzan and the interior of the country, because of its conquest by General

Leclerc's dashing invasion. It might seem to her a useful rounding off of her African empire. But the word "empire" is out of favour just now, particularly in the United States; and the gallant dash of a small column of daring French soldiers, brushing aside the weak opposition of timorous Italian garrisons of desert posts, would not be held sufficient to support France's claim, even if she were disposed to make it.

That leaves out all the European nations which might urge their right to Libya on any grounds; unless Spain puts forward her twenty years' ownership of Tripoli in the sixteenth century. But I do not suppose that even the most ardent Falangist would do that. As well might the Bey of Tunis assert *his* claim.

What, then, remains? Autonomy? Self-government? That will be the first cry of the arm-chair statesman who has never been out of his own country.

But in the first place there is not, never has been, a Libyan nation. Cyrenaica is an almost unpeopled desert, as hundreds of thousands of British, Dominion, American and Allied soldiers can testify. Even her few small coast towns never had many inhabitants.

Nor is Tripolitania a nation, and it never has been. Her whole population, spread over such a vast territory, does not amount to half a million. Where are they to be found? Well, before the war Tripoli was reputed to have seventy thousand. Five days after its capture a war correspondent declared the number to be ninety thousand, of whom thirty thousand were Italians. The other coast towns have very few inhabitants, Misurata was supposed to have seventeen thousand, Homs seven thousand. The Jebel has no towns, hardly a village; but its inhabitants are presumed to be some thousands. The whole of the vast territory of the Fezzan is estimated at from fifty to eighty thousand of many and different races, with no cohesion but much hostility between them.

How can all these varying elements be called a nation? How could they be expected to work together? The non-African townsfolk in the coastal strip of Tripolitania are civilised and, in different degrees, educated. What affinity could they have with the town-dwellers of the mud-built labyrinths of Murzuk, Ghadames and Ghat? And how much less with the pit-dwellers or the free warriors of the Hammada-el-Homra and the Touareg clans, themselves always at variance with their other tribes?

The majority of the inhabitants of Tripoli are Moslems. The Europeans are Italians or Maltese, the Jews have nothing in common with the Arabs or Berbers who live in the same city. The negroes themselves came originally from many Sudanese races, and to-day have no relationship with anyone outside their

own small community. Think of the difficulty of getting even a Town Council out of all these ! Then imagine trying to elect a House of Commons or a House of Representatives from the people of Libya !

I have recently seen in something from a Government Department the Shaikh of the Senussi described as the " Leader of the Free Libyans." I have endeavoured to explain in another chapter that the Senussi are members of a Moslem religious brotherhood composed of men of many races and several countries, from Algeria, Morocco (but not many from there), Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Arabia and the Sudan. Indeed the bulk of them to-day are probably negroes from many nations and tribes in Central Africa. Their connection with Libya practically dates from the time when the Founder of the Order, an Algerian, selected the oasis of Jaghub as his place of residence and died there, his tomb making it a place of pilgrimage ; and his successors moved to Kufara. Both spots are in the territory for the time being under British rule since the expulsion of the Italians. But the highly respected Chief of the Order, El Senussi Sidi Mahommed-el-Idris, has lived in Egypt for many years. So it is not correct to classify the Senussi as Libyans, free or otherwise. If many of them are inspired with the spirit of hostility to all non-Moslems they would hardly be a good foundation to erect a new nation on.

There remains a possible solution of the problem. It is that whatever takes the place of that dismal failure, the League of Nations (I wonder if many of its ardent advocates asked the citizens of Geneva what they thought of it), should constitute Libya into an infant State and give it as a mandate to a carefully selected nation.

I would suggest the United States of America as that nation. There would be no fear of it trying to turn the mandated territory into its own possession. I saw the Philippines shortly after they came into the hands of the Americans and have watched through many years how the latter tried to educate the Filipinos in developing the resources of their islands and teaching them how to govern themselves. They made mistakes, certainly ; but the results of their efforts and tuition were plainly evidenced in this war.

But to bring up Libya to maturity so that it could stand alone would be a difficult task. It is a poor country with no natural wealth, no mineral wealth, as far as is known, to pay for its development. And much money would be needed for that. Where would the money come from to pay for railways, irrigation, roads, education ? It has no oil, no coal for industry. How long would it take to unite the various races sufficiently to create a Judiciary and a Civil Service ? Who would make the laws for it ? And when and how could a legislative assembly be formed

for the country? What of Tripolitania as the National Home for Jews?

For this immense task I know no nation capable enough, rich enough and altruistic, enough to carry it out except the United States of America. And if the Americans did consent to undertake it, it would have the great result of keeping their interest in the affairs of the Old World alive and prevent them from slipping back into the isolation that was one great cause of the disasters that have come upon us to-day.

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